

José Pablo García

# LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION

A journey through Palestine



Europe  
COMICS

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[www.lifeunderoccupation.org](http://www.lifeunderoccupation.org)

EUROPE  
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After several decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is viewed as a frozen conflict, a history of hatred spanning over a hundred years. The path to nowhere twists this way and that depending on whoever is in the White House or the Israeli parliament, with no resolution in sight. We tend to oversimplify the narrative by talking of a Wall, which is much like all those other Walls that have appeared at many points in history. Or we report on the fierce clashes between the military and radical groups – stories that make a frequent appearance on the front pages. The reality is far more vivid and cruel: the victims, many of whom are young people and children, are suffering drawn-out agony every day.

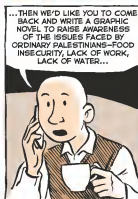
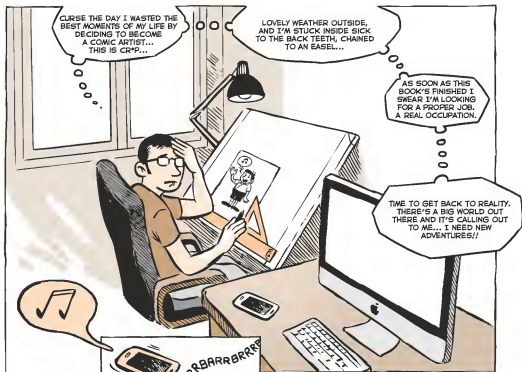
We wanted to offer a fresh perspective on 50 years of occupation in Palestine, to look at its effects on the ordinary lives of over 4 million people. *Life under Occupation* focuses on the impact the conflict has had on access to clean water and on the livelihoods of Palestinians.

These difficulties should not have arisen, given the protections afforded by International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We have no desire to point fingers at anyone. We simply gather evidence and facts, and bear witness to what the occupation has entailed for the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Our work is made possible thanks to the support of institutions such as the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), ensuring that every person has access to clean water and food. This is our area of expertise and we achieve our goals in up to 50 countries day in, day out.

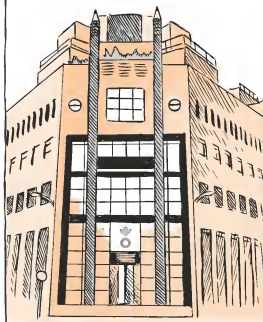
A graphic novel seems the best form to make a statement because it offers a powerful medium through which to offer our testimony. This story is the chronicle of a 10-day journey through the occupied Palestinian territory from Nablus to Gaza, from the pen of graphic novel artist José Pablo García. The irresistible combination of his youth and talent will undoubtedly connect with a readership of all ages and reveal to them the human side of those who suffer under the occupation. We write in defiance of the indifference which generates and sustains lifelong conflicts. We write with empathy for other human beings, empathy is the motivation behind all forms of solidarity. It requires courage to see into the lives of others, and only then can we be ready to do everything in our power to improve those lives.

Olivier Longué  
Chief Executive Officer of Action Against Hunger Spain





A FEW WEEKS LATER I FOUND MYSELF AT THE ACTION AGAINST HUNGER HQ IN MADRID TO ATTEND A SERIES OF BRIEFINGS AND TO CLEAR UP ANY DOUBTS ABOUT THE JOURNEY...



IT'S GREAT THAT YOU'VE AGREED TO DO THIS!

WELL, I HAVE TO ADMIT I'VE BEEN FEELING A TAD NERVOUS...

THAT'S ONLY NORMAL. IT'LL BE MY FIRST TOO AND I'M FAIRLY ANXIOUS ABOUT IT...



FIRST I HAD A BRIEFING WITH CARMEN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS...



THEN I MET WITH ALICIA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS...



THEN THERE WAS GABRIEL, HEAD OF MIDDLE EAST...



FOLLOWED BY CHEMA, HEAD OF WATER AND SANITATION...



PACO, DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY...



...AND FINALLY CARLOS, MANAGER FOR FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD.



OK, WE WON'T MEET UP AGAIN UNTIL WE LEAVE. GOOD TO MEET YOU.

SAME HERE!

PHEW, DIZZY WITH AN OVERLOAD OF INFORMATION RIGHT NOW...

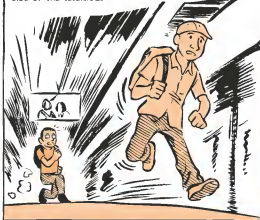


OH, BY THE WAY-LUIS, THE DIRECTOR FOR OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, IS PASSING THROUGH MALAGA IN A FEW DAYS AND HE'D REALLY LIKE TO MEET YOU FOR ANOTHER BRIEFING.

ANOTHER BRIEFING? WHAT IS IT WITH THESE PEOPLE AND THEIR MEETINGS?!



A FEW DAYS LATER WE WERE ON OUR WAY, CONNECTING IN BRUSSELS. A DELAY LEFT US WITH JUST 15 MINUTES TO MAKE IT TO CHECK-IN, WHICH WAS ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE TERMINAL.



AND THERE IN THE QUEUE WE HAD OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE OF CULTURAL IMMERSION. A GROUP OF JEWS WAS SAYING MORNING PRAYERS BEFORE THE FLIGHT. I WAS INTRIGUED BY THE SMALL OBJECTS TIED TO THEIR HEADS AND ARMS...



THEY WERE TEFILLIN: MINIATURE LEATHER BOXES CONTAINING VERSES FROM THE TORAH.

WE HAD BEEN WARNED ABOUT ISRAEL'S STRICT AIRPORT SECURITY MEASURES. MAX GAVE ME SOME TIPS.



IF THEY ASK WHETHER YOU'RE A VOLUNTEER, TELL THEM THE TRUTH: YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL PAID BY THE NGO. VOLUNTEERS TEND TO BE VIEWED AS ACTIVISTS AND TROUBLEMAKERS.

UH... HUH...

WHERE ARE YOU STAYING? JERUSALEM. WHICH AREA? BEIT HANINA. THE REASON FOR YOUR JOURNEY? TO LEARN ABOUT WATER AND FOOD PROJECTS, AND TO VISIT SOME OF THE CITIES...

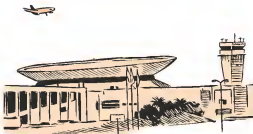
ARE YOU TRAVELING TO GAZA? MAYBE. ANSWER EVERYTHING BUT DON'T GIVE MORE INFORMATION THAN NECESSARY.

THEY'LL REPEAT THE QUESTIONS AND IT COULD TAKE HOURS. BUT DON'T SHOW THEM THAT YOU'RE WORRIED. THERE'S NOTHING TO HIDE AND THEY'LL LET YOU THROUGH.

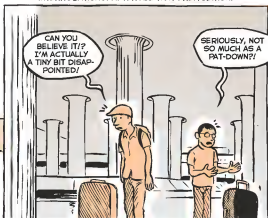
H-HOLD ON, DO I HAVE TO SAY ALL THAT IN ENGLISH?

OF COURSE!

WE ARRIVED ON TIME AT BEN GURION AIRPORT IN TEL AVIV...



BUT THERE WAS NO DRAMA TO BE HAD. NO TERRIFYING INTERROGATIONS. AFTER ALL THAT PREPARATION!



CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? I'M ACTUALLY A TINY BIT DISAPPOINTED!

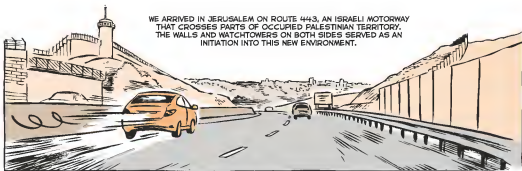
SERIOUSLY, NOT SO MUCH AS A PAT-DOWN?!



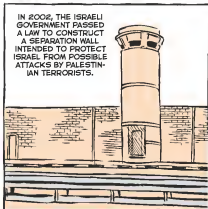
# JERUSALEM

*A divided city*





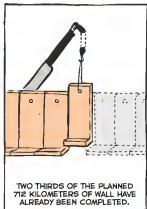
WE ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM ON ROUTE 443, AN ISRAELI MOTORWAY THAT CROSSES PARTS OF OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY. THE WALLS AND WATCHTOWERS ON BOTH SIDES SERVED AS AN INITIATION INTO THIS NEW ENVIRONMENT.



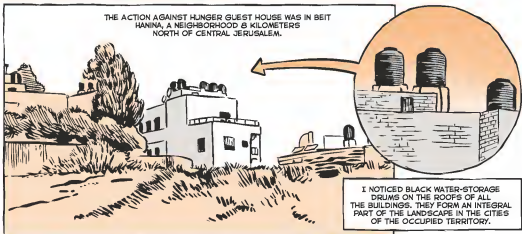
IN 2002, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT PASSED A LAW TO CONSTRUCT A SEPARATION WALL INTENDED TO PROTECT ISRAEL FROM POSSIBLE ATTACKS BY PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS.



AND SO IT WAS BUILT: COMPLETE WITH ELECTRIC FENCES, DITCHES, BARBED WIRE, SAND STRIPS TO DETECT FOOTPRINTS AND AN ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM.



TWO THIRDS OF THE PLANNED 712 KILOMETERS OF WALL HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED.



THE ACTION AGAINST HUNGER GUEST HOUSE WAS IN BEIT HANNA, A NEIGHBORHOOD 8 KILOMETERS NORTH OF CENTRAL JERUSALEM.

I NOTICED BLACK WATER-STORAGE DRUMS ON THE ROOFS OF ALL THE BUILDINGS. THEY FORM AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LANDSCAPE IN THE CITIES OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY.

RICARDO, THE ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER IN JERUSALEM, WAS WAITING FOR US.



WELCOME! HOW DID YOUR JOURNEY GO?

WE LEFT OUR LUGGAGE THERE AND WALKED TO HEADQUARTERS, WHICH WAS JUST FIVE MINUTES AWAY.



WE MET OMAR, WHO GAVE US A BRIEFING ON THE VISIT WE'D BE MAKING TO HEBRON IN TWO DAYS' TIME.

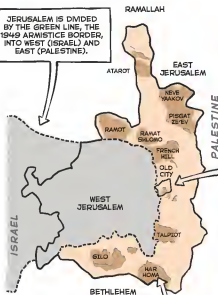


RICARDO SHOWED UP...

OK GUYS, I'M DONE FOR TODAY. IF YOU FEEL LIKE TAKING IN THE SIGHTS, I'M ALL YOURS!



JERUSALEM IS DIVIDED BY THE GREEN LINE, THE 1949 ARMISTICE BORDER, INTO WEST (ISRAEL) AND EAST (PALESTINE).



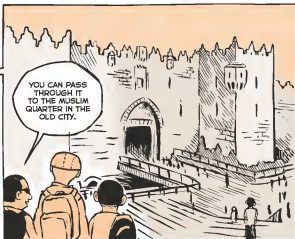
AS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, THERE ARE FREQUENT CLASHES IN THIS AREA, AS THERE ARE SEVERAL ISRAELI COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS HERE.

RICARDO WANTED US TO SEE THE OLD CITY.

AND THERE IS THE DAMASCUS GATE.



YOU CAN PASS THROUGH IT TO THE MUSLIM QUARTER IN THE OLD CITY.



YOU CAN SEE THAT THE AREA IS HEAVILY GUARDED BY ISRAELI FORCES. LATELY THERE HAVE BEEN CLASHES THERE THAT HAVE ENDED IN TRAGEDY.



KILOMETERS

MUNICIPAL LIMIT ESTABLISHED BY ISRAEL 1967-1993.

PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

ISRAELI TERRITORY

ISRAELI COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS

THE GREEN LINE (1949 ARMISTICE BORDER) DIVIDES JERUSALEM INTO EAST (PALESTINE) AND WEST (JERUSALEM).

THE OLD CITY IN JERUSALEM HAS BECOME A QUINTESSENTIAL TOURIST ATTRACTION, PACKED WITH SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS. IT IS MADE UP OF FOUR QUARTERS AND COVERS AN AREA OF AROUND ONE SQUARE KILOMETER.

### THE CHRISTIAN QUARTER

...WAS BUILT AROUND THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER, AND IS ONE OF THE MOST SACRED PLACES IN CHRISTIANITY. IT IS CONTROLLED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH. NOTABLY, THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE, FRANCISCAN MONASTERY OF ST. SAVIOUR AND LATIN PATRIARCHATE ARE ALSO FOUND HERE.



JAFFA GATE

### THE ARMENIAN QUARTER

...WHICH IS ALSO CHRISTIAN, DEVELOPED AROUND THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JAMES. IT IS A PEACEFUL NEIGHBOURHOOD; ECCLESIASTICAL INSTITUTIONS ARE TUCKED AWAY BEHIND THE HIGH WALLS OF MONASTERIES AND CHURCHES, LENDING THE PLACE AN AIR OF MYSTERY.



ZION GATE

### THE MUSLIM QUARTER

...DEVELOPED AROUND HARAM AL SHARIF (AL AQSA MOSQUE). THE QUARTER INCLUDES SACRED PLACES THAT ARE RELEVANT TO OTHER RELIGIONS, SUCH AS THE VIA DOLOROSA FOR CHRISTIANS OR THE KOTEL HAKATAN (OR THE LITTLE WESTERN WALL) WHICH IS HIGHLY FREQUENTED BY ORTHODOX AND ULTRA-ORTHODOX JEWS.

THE DAMASCUS GATE

HERODY'S GATE

LIONS' GATE

THE DOME OF THE ROCK

### TEMPLE MOUNT OR HARAM AL SHARIF (AL AQSA MOSQUE)

...THIS ENCLOSURE IS A SACRED PLACE FOR JEWS AND MUSLIMS.

### THE JEWISH QUARTER

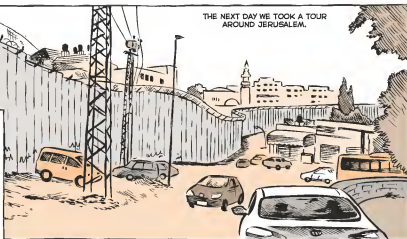
...WAS BUILT NEXT TO THE WAILING WALL. IT HOUSES NUMEROUS YESHIVOT (SCHOOLS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES) AND SYNAGOGUES, IN PARTICULAR HURVA SYNAGOGUE.



WE WANDERED IN AMAZEMENT THROUGH THE MARKETS, WE VISITED THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER, AND WE DINED AT A LEBANESE RESTAURANT IN THE CHRISTIAN QUARTER.



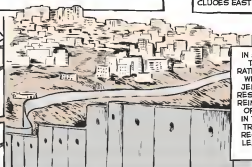
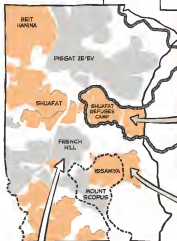
THE NEXT DAY WE TOOK A TOUR  
AROUND JERUSALEM.



PALESTINIAN POPULATION  
ISRAELI COLONIAL  
SETTLEMENTS  
WALLS  
THE GREEN LINE

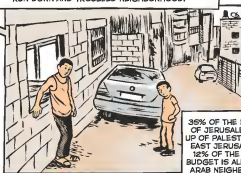
THE SHUAFAT REFUGEE CAMP WAS BUILT  
IN 1965 TO HOUSE REFUGEE PALESTINI-  
ANS IN THE WAKE OF THE 1948 WAR. IT IS  
LOCATED NEXT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF  
SHUAFAT IN EAST JERUSALEM.

IN 1967, AFTER THE SIX-  
DAY WAR, ISRAEL OCCUPIED  
WEST BANK, WHICH IN-  
CLUDES EAST JERUSALEM.



IN 2002 A WALL BEGAN  
TO GO UP. IT SEPA-  
RATED THIS AREA (ALONG  
WITH OTHERS IN EAST  
JERUSALEM) FROM THE  
REST OF THE WEST BANK,  
REINFORCING THE INTENT  
OF CERTAIN SECTORS  
IN THE ISRAELI ADMINI-  
STRATION THAT WISH TO  
RECLAIM EAST JERUSALEM  
AS PART OF THEIR  
TERRITORY.

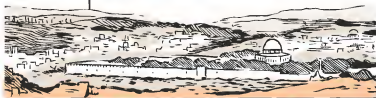
WE WALKED THE STEEP STREETS OF ISSAWIYA, A FAIRLY  
RUN-DOWN AND TROUBLED NEIGHBORHOOD.



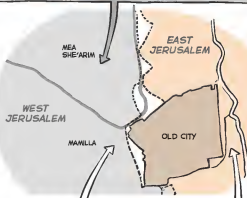
36% OF THE POPULATION  
OF JERUSALEM IS MADE  
UP OF PALESTINIANS FROM  
EAST JERUSALEM; JUST  
12% OF THE MUNICIPAL  
BUDGET IS ALLOCATED TO  
ARAB NEIGHBORHOODS.



THE FIRST UNIVERSITY OF  
ISRAEL, THE HEBREW  
UNIVERSITY, ESTABLISHED  
ONE OF ITS CAMPUSES NEAR  
THE FRENCH HILL COLONIAL  
SETTLEMENT IN MOUNT SCOPUS.  
THERE ARE WONDERFUL  
VIEWS OF THE OLD CITY FROM  
HERE AND YOU CAN EVEN SEE  
AS FAR AS THE WEST BANK  
CITY OF BETHLEHEM.



WE WALKED THROUGH THE PICTURESQUE NEIGHBORHOOD OF MEA SHE'ARIM IN WEST JERUSALEM, WHERE ULTRA-ORTHODOX JEWS LIVE. I THOUGHT WE HAD STEPPED BACK IN TIME BECAUSE OF THE WAY PEOPLE WERE DRESSED.

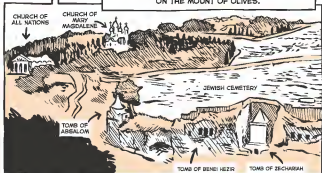


WE ALSO TOOK A STROLL AROUND THE MODERN OPEN-AIR SHOPPING CENTER IN MAMILLA, WHICH WAS BUILT IN 2007. IT IS TEEMING WITH RESTAURANTS, SHOPS AND ART GALLERIES.



I ENJOYED ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS PANORAMIC VIEWS OF THE OLD CITY FROM THE STUNNING JEWISH CEMETERY ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

THEN WE MADE OUR WAY TO THE CITY WALL TO CONTEMPLATE ALL THE MONUMENTS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.



THE OTTOMANS BUILT AN ENTRANCE IN THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF THE WALL...

HAMID AND OMAR WERE EXCELLENT GUIDES, AND THEY HAD AN INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM FOR THE HISTORY OF THEIR CITY.



AS WE RETURNED TO THE OLD CITY THROUGH THE JAFFA GATE, OMAR EXPLAINED HIS RATHER COMPLICATED POSITION AS A CITIZEN.

I HAVE AN IDENTITY CARD FROM JERUSALEM, BUT I'M NOT AN ISRAELI CITIZEN, AND I CAN'T VOTE IN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS.

I HAVE A JORDANIAN PASSPORT, BUT I CAN'T VOTE FOR JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT BECAUSE MY PASSPORT IS JUST TEMPORARY AND I'M NOT A RESIDENT THERE.

I COULD VOTE IN THE GENERAL ELECTION IN PALESTINE, BUT THE LAST ONE TOOK PLACE IN 2006...

MY WIFE IS AN ARAB CITIZEN OF ISRAEL AND HER FAMILY LIVES IN THE WEST BANK...

...ON THE OTHER HAND, I'M PALESTINIAN, I LIVE IN EAST JERUSALEM AND SOME OF MY FAMILY LIVES IN ACRE WHICH IS IN ISRAEL...

...AND I PAY MY TAXES IN ISRAEL.

CONFUSING OR WHAT?  
HE'S LOST ME!





WE ARRANGED TO MEET UP THAT AFTERNOON WITH RICARDO AND HIS GIRLFRIEND NATHALIE, WHO WAS CURIOUS TO ATTEND AN EVENT TAKING PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN QUARTER.

IT WAS OPEN MIC NIGHT, ORGANIZED IN THE BASEMENT OF THE AL-MA'MAL FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART.



THE ACTS ONLY HAD A FEW MINUTES EACH TO SHOW THEIR AUDIENCE WHAT THEY DID BEST...

THERE WERE ALL KINDS OF PERFORMANCES: HIP-HOP, BEATBOX... AND MUCH TO MY SURPRISE, IT CHALLENGED THE PRE-CONCEIVED NOTIONS I'D HAD ABOUT ARAB YOUTH.



A CONTEMPORARY DANCER GAVE A STRANGE PERFORMANCE IN WHICH SHE MADE SPASMODIC, ROBOTIC MOVEMENTS IN TIME WITH INDUSTRIAL SOUNDS—WITHOUT MOVING FROM HER CHAIR.



A GUY PLAYED UNUSUAL COVERS OF INDIE ROCK SONGS ON HIS OUD.



IT WAS A REAL SHAME THAT MAX AND I DIDN'T IN FACT DARE TO GO ON STAGE. WE COULD HAVE GIVEN OUR COUNTRY'S MUSICAL REPUTATION A REAL BOOST. NOT.

ONCE THE SHOW HAD FINISHED...

WE CAN GO TO AN ARMENIAN RESTAURANT NEAR HERE, IF YOU LIKE.



I LOVE FALAFEL/ DO YOU KNOW IF IT ORIGINATES FROM ARMENIA?

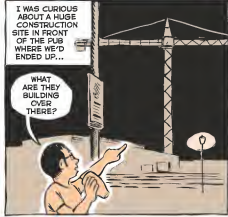
I DON'T THINK SO. IT'S A BIT OF A MYSTERY: SOME SAY THAT FALAFEL IS LEBANESE, OTHERS THAT IT COMES FROM TRADITIONAL JEWISH CUISINE... I'VE EVEN HEARD THAT IT COULD HAVE COME FROM PAKISTAN OR INDIA!



WE WANDERED THROUGH MAMILLA, A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR THE JAFFA GATE. IT WAS A NO MAN'S LAND FROM 1948 UNTIL ISRAEL OCCUPIED AND ANNEXED EAST JERUSALEM IN 1967. NOW, WITH ITS OPEN-AIR SHOPPING CENTER AND RESTAURANTS, MAMILLA WOULD PASS FOR ANY EUROPEAN CITY.



THERE WAS EVEN AN ILLUMINATED "EIFFEL TOWER."



I WAS CURIOUS ABOUT A HUGE CONSTRUCTION SITE IN FRONT OF THE PUB WHERE WE'D ENDED UP...

WHAT ARE THEY BUILDING OVER THERE?

THE SITE WAS FOR THE MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE, A LONG-CHERISHED DREAM OF THE ISRAELIS. THE PROJECT HAD SPARKED CONTROVERSY BECAUSE IT WAS BEING BUILT ON THE SITE OF A PROMINENT MUSLIM CEMETERY.







# THE SOUTHERN WEST BANK

From Hebron to Bethlehem

THE NEXT DAY, WE GOT READY FOR OUR JOURNEY TO AREA C IN HEBRON.

IN 1993, YITZHAK RABIN, BILL CLINTON AND YASSER ARAFAT SIGNED THE OSLO ACCORDS. THREE AREAS WERE ESTABLISHED AND A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS WAS AGREED UPON FOR NEGOTIATIONS TO BE CONSOLIDATED IN ORDER TO CREATE A PALESTINIAN STATE.



THOSE AREAS WERE INTENDED TO BECOME THE FUTURE INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE.



BUT IN THE END, THE INTERIM NATURE OF THAT AGREEMENT WAS NEVER RESOLVED. THE DIVISION CONTINUES TO EXIST TODAY.

#### AREA A

IS UNDER THE PALESTINE AUTHORITY'S CIVIL AND SECURITY CONTROL AND COMPRISES THE SEVEN MAJOR PALESTINIAN CITIES.

#### AREA B

IS UNDER THE PALESTINE AUTHORITY'S CIVIL CONTROL AND UNDER ISRAEL'S SECURITY CONTROL.

#### AREA C

IS UNDER ISRAEL'S CIVIL AND SECURITY CONTROL. IT CONSTITUTES AROUND 63% OF PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, AND CONSISTS MAINLY OF RURAL AREAS.

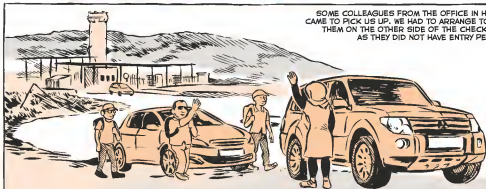


ISRAELI COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS

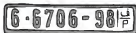


NATURAL RESERVES UNDER ISRAELI CONTROL

SOME COLLEAGUES FROM THE OFFICE IN HEBRON CAME TO PICK US UP. WE HAD TO ARRANGE TO MEET THEM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CHECK-POINT AS THEY DID NOT HAVE ENTRY PERMITS.

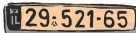


THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF LICENSE PLATES IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE:



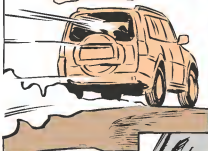
I NOTICED THAT THE LICENSE PLATES ON THE TWO CARS WERE VERY DIFFERENT...

VEHICLES WITH PALESTINE PLATES, SHOWING GREEN NUMBERS ON A WHITE BACKGROUND, ARE NOT PERMITTED TO CIRCULATE INSIDE ISRAEL OR AROUND THE AREAS IN PALESTINE THAT LIE OUTSIDE THE WALL.

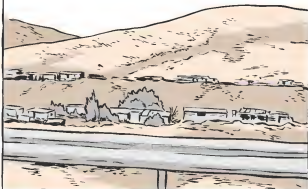


VEHICLES WITH ISRAELI PLATES, SHOWING BLACK NUMBERS ON A YELLOW BACKGROUND, CAN CIRCULATE UNRESTRICTED AROUND ISRAEL AND PALESTINE.

WE WENT TO VISIT  
THE VILLAGES OF  
UWM AL-KHAIR  
AND SUSIYA.



ON THE WAY WE SAW COUNTLESS SHACKS DOTTED  
AROUND THE SEMI-DESERT HILLS, MANY OF THEM  
HUDDLED ALONG THE EDGE OF THE HIGHWAY.



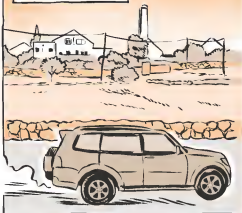
OUR COMPANIONS WERE FATMA,  
HEAD OF THE FOOD SECURITY  
AND LIVELIHOOD UNIT...

...AND LUAY,  
LIVESTOCK  
EXPERT.

THIS HIGHWAY WAS  
BUILT BY THE ISRAELI  
GOVERNMENT TO  
PROVIDE A LINK TO  
THE ISRAELI COLONIAL  
SETTLEMENTS.



TO OUR LEFT LAY THE  
MODERN AND COM-  
FORTABLE CHALETES OF  
CARMEL, SUPPORTED BY  
ISRAELI GOVERNMENT  
SUBSIDIES.



AND RIGHT NEXT TO THAT SETTLEMENT WE FOUND  
UWM AL-KHAIR, WHOSE PATRIARCH SULEIMAN  
KATHALEEN CAME TO GREET US WITH ONE  
OF HIS GRANDSONS.



SULEIMAN WAS JUST EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN NAKBA, "THE DISASTER," OCCURRED--IN WHICH INHABITANTS FROM 530 PALESTINIAN VILLAGES WERE FORCIBLY DISPLACED DURING THE 1948 WAR. SULEIMAN'S FAMILY BELONGED TO ONE OF THE JAHALIN TRIBES IN TEL ASAD IN THE NEGEV DESERT, AND THEY HAD TO FLEE.



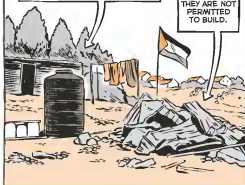
IN 1965 THEY ARRIVED AT THESE LANDS, WHICH THEY BOUGHT FROM THE AUTHORITIES OF YATTA IN EXCHANGE FOR ONE HUNDRED CAMELS.



BUT AFTER THE OSLO ACCORDS, THE MAJORITY OF THOSE LANDS WERE CONFISCATED.



THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS MADE UP OF FIVE FAMILIES, IS NOW OBLIGED TO LIVE OFF-GRID AND BUY WATER TANKS AT EXORBITANT PRICES.



THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BUILD.

THEY WANT US TO LEAVE, BUT WE'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE UP ANOTHER INCH OF OUR LAND IN SPITE OF ALL THE HARASSMENT WE'VE ENDURED.

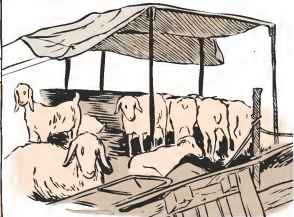
SO WE CARRY ON LIVING HERE AND RESISTING. WE DON'T WANT OUR CHILDREN TO SUFFER EXILE AGAIN.



HIS SON BILAL TELLS US THAT HE CULTIVATES THYME DURING THE SUMMER SEASON, AS THE SOIL HERE IS VERY DRY AND THE HERB DOESN'T NEED MUCH WATER. THEN HE SELLS IT IN HEBRON.



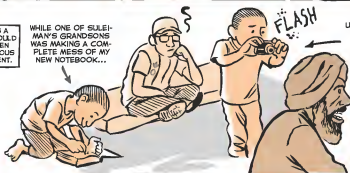
HE DEDICATES THE REST OF THE YEAR TO LOOKING AFTER AND FATTENING UP HIS TEN GOATS.





MY DEBUT AS A JOURNALIST COULD NOT HAVE BEEN LESS GLAMOROUS AT THAT MOMENT.

WHILE ONE OF SULEIMAN'S GRANDSONS WAS MAKING A COMPLETE MESS OF MY NEW NOTEBOOK...

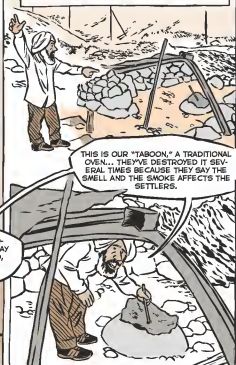


...HIS TWIN BROTHER WAS USING UP THE BATTERY AND MEMORY ON MY CAMERA, TAKING PHOTOS LEFT RIGHT AND CENTER.

SULEIMAN SHOWED US AROUND THE LAND.



SUDDENLY, HE STOPPED IN FRONT OF A JUMBLED METAL STRUCTURE AND MADE A GREAT FUSS OF CALLING US OVER TO COME AND LOOK.



SULEIMAN, QUITE UPSET, SHOWED US THE REMAINS OF A BRICK HOUSE THAT HAD BEEN DEMOLISHED A FEW MONTHS AGO.



WE THOUGHT OF HIM AS A MAN FULL OF STRENGTH AND DIGNITY, WHO WILL NEVER LOSE HOPE OF A BETTER FUTURE FOR HIS FAMILY.

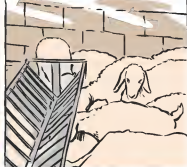


IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING... ALLAH IS GREAT!

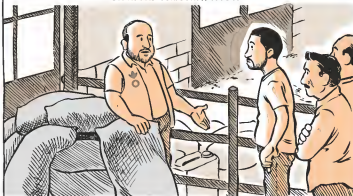
WE WENT TO AN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY FARM NEARBY WHICH WORKS WITH BEDOUBINS IN THE AREA...



...GIVING THEM ADVICE SO THAT THEY CAN IMPROVE THE CARE OF THEIR GOATS AND GET THE BEST OUT OF THEM.



LUAY, WHO WOULD BE OUR DRIVER THAT DAY, TEACHES COURSES ON HOW TO FEED ANIMALS AT LOW COST WITH A FODDER MADE UP OF A MIXTURE OF CORN, SOY BEANS AND SUNFLOWER SEEDS.



OIL, SALT AND SPECIAL COMPONENTS DESIGNED TO PREVENT DISEASE ARE ADDED TO THE MIXTURE.



A TON OF THIS FODDER COSTS 500 EUROS. A KILO OF MEAT FROM THE ANIMAL COSTS 25 EUROS AT THE COMMUNITY SHOPPING CENTER.

A EWE WILL TYPICALLY BEAR ONE LAMB A YEAR. LOCAL PEOPLE ARE TAUGHT TO IMPROVE BREEDING TECHNIQUES SO THAT EWES CAN BEAR THREE LAMBS IN TWO YEARS.



TWENTY WOMEN HAVE RECEIVED A PREGNANT EWE.



A EWE PROVIDES MILK FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY...



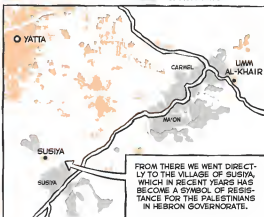
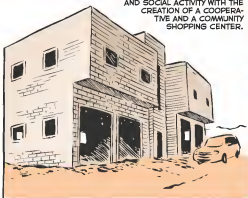
...AND ITS LAMBS CAN BE SOLD TO THE COOPERATIVES.



NEARBY, A BUILDING WAS BEING CONSTRUCTED, INTENDED FOR THE USE OF CMILIAN EDUCATION THROUGH A PROGRAM OF VARIOUS COURSES AND THE PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY WITH THE CREATION OF A COOPERATIVE AND A COMMUNITY SHOPPING CENTER.

PALESTINE VILLAGES

ISRAELI COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS



FROM THERE WE WENT DIRECTLY TO THE VILLAGE OF SUSIYA, WHICH IN RECENT YEARS HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE FOR THE PALESTINIANS IN HEBRON GOVERNORATE.



THE 450 INHABITANTS LIVING IN SUSIYA ARE MEMBERS OF 47 FAMILIES. THEY ARE SANDWICHED BETWEEN AN ISRAELI SETTLEMENT AND AN ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, FROM WHICH THE FAMILIES HAD BEEN EXPELLED IN 1986 WHEN THE REMAINS OF A SYNAGOGUE WERE DISCOVERED THERE.



SINCE THEN, THEIR HOUSES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED ON THREE OCCASIONS AND THEY LIVE IN PRECARIOUS HOVELS MADE FROM CANVAS AND PLASTIC, UNDER CONSTANT THREAT OF DISPOSSESSION AND FORCIBLE TRANSFER. ISRAEL IS PLANNING TO CONNECT THE ISRAELI COLONIAL SETTLEMENT IN SUSIYA WITH BOTH AN ADJACENT MILITARY BASE AND THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE OF THE SYNAGOGUE.



WE ENTERED A CONTAINER, THAT DOUBLES AS THE LOCAL COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS.

EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE THE TITLE DEEDS TO THIS LAND, 80% OF OUR BUILDINGS ARE UNDER A DEMOLITION ORDER.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING ISRAELI ONES, ARE HELPING US TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION.



THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SOME NGOS AND COUNTLESS ACTIVISTS—PALESTINE, ISRAELI AND INTERNATIONAL ALIKE—HAS PROVED TO BE INSTRUMENTAL IN HALTING THE DEMOLITIONS.



HIGH-PROFILE CULTURAL FIGURES HAVE ALSO WEIGHED IN WITH THEIR SUPPORT IN RECENT YEARS. THE NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR MARIO VARGAS LLOSA VISITED THIS TINY VILLAGE AND WROTE A NUMBER OF PIECES ON THE SUBJECT.

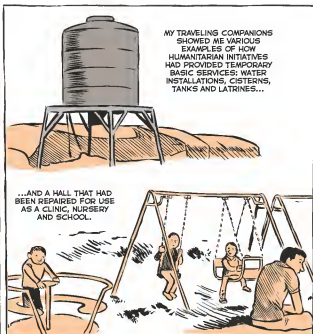
DEMOLITION OF SUSIYA WOULD BE HARMFUL, AND PROVOCATIVE. WE URGE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES TO WORK WITH THE RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE TO FINALIZE A PLAN THAT ADDRESSES THE RESIDENTS' HUMANITARIAN NEEDS.



DIPLOMATS AND POLITICIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD HAVE SPOKEN OUT, SUCH AS JOHN KIRBY, SPOKESPERSON FOR THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE.



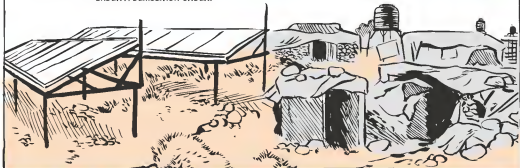
CURRENTLY, THE VILLAGERS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TAKE THEIR SHEEP OUT TO PASTURE IN THE SURROUNDING FIELDS, OR TO BENEFIT FROM THE OLIVE TREES.



MY TRAVELING COMPANIONS SHOWED ME VARIOUS EXAMPLES OF HOW HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVES HAD PROVIDED TEMPORARY BASIC SERVICES: WATER INSTALLATIONS, CISTERNS, TANKS AND LATRINES...

...AND A HALL THAT HAD BEEN REPAIRED FOR USE AS A CLINIC, NURSERY AND SCHOOL.

THESE SOLAR PANELS, THE ONLY SOURCE OF ENERGY FOR THE VILLAGE, WERE FINANCED BY EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS. THE PANELS ARE NOW UNDER A DEMOLITION ORDER.



BEFORE SAYING OUR FAREWELLS WE VISITED AN UNDERGROUND SHOP WHERE VILLAGERS SELL THEIR OWN HANDICRAFTS, BAGS AND EMBROIDERY. MAX AND I BOUGHT TWO JARS OF DELICIOUS, LOCALLY-PRODUCED HONEY.

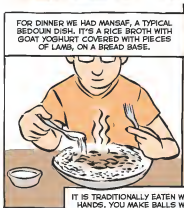




UPON ARRIVING IN HEBRON, WE MADE A STOP AT A PHOENICIAN POTTERY WORKSHOP TO PICK UP A SOUVENIR. I'D NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO SEE A GLASS-BLOWER, AS THE TRADE HAS ALMOST DISAPPEARED IN MY OWN COUNTRY.



WE WERE SURPRISED BY THE FACT THAT A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE GOODS WAS AIMED AT THE ISRAELI MARKET.



FOR DINNER WE HAD MANSAF, A TYPICAL BEDOON DISH. IT'S A RICE BROTH WITH GOAT YOGHURT COVERED WITH PIECES OF LAMB, ON A BREAD BASE.

IT IS TRADITIONALLY EATEN WITH YOUR HANDS. YOU MAKE BALLS WITH THE RICE AND DIP THEM INTO THE BROTH.

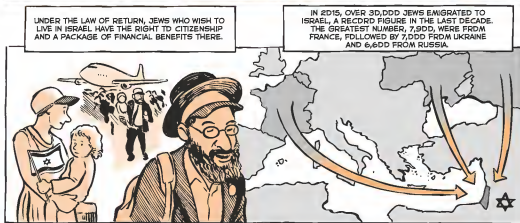


A TRULY DELICIOUS DISH, IDEAL FOR RECHARGING YOUR ENERGY AFTER A TRIP THROUGH THE DESERT. EATEN FOR DINNER, THOUGH, IT TAKES YOUR HEAD OFF.



THE HIGH BIRTH RATE IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND IT IS PART OF THEIR CULTURE.

AHMED, HEAD OF ACTION AGAINST HUNGER IN HEBRON, HAD JOINED US FOR DINNER. DURING OUR AFTER-DINNER CHAT HE EXPLAINED THAT A "BATTLE" OF DEMOGRAPHICS HAD BEEN WAGED FOR DECADES.



A FAMILIAR SIGHT IN ARAB TOWNS: EVEN THOUGH IT WAS VERY LATE, SHOPS AND STALLS WERE STILL OPEN FOR BUSINESS.



IT WAS THE EVE OF RAMADAN. THE STREETS WERE DECKED OUT WITH BRIGHT LIGHTS SIMILAR TO CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

AFTER THE SIX-DAY WAR IN 1967, VARIOUS FUNDAMENTALIST JEWISH GROUPS WANTED TO STOP THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY FROM BEING RECLAIMED. THEY BEGAN TO OCCUPY MORE PARTS OF THE CITY.



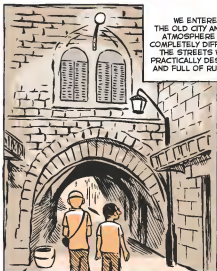
AFTER DECADES OF TENSIONS, THE HEBRON PROTOCOL WAS SIGNED IN 1997. IT WAS PART OF A TEMPORARY MEASURE INTENDED TO MITIGATE CONFLICT IN THE AREA. HEBRON WAS CONSEQUENTLY SPLIT IN TWO: ZONE H1, UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY, AND ZONE H2, UNDER ISRAELI MILITARY CONTROL.



HEBRON IS THE ONLY CITY IN PALESTINE WITH ISRAELI COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS IN ITS CENTER. OF ITS 200,000 INHABITANTS, AROUND 40,000 PALESTINIANS LIVE WITH 400-850 ISRAELI SETTLERS IN THE OLD CITY.



8,000 MORE ISRAELIS LIVE IN THE KIRYAT ARBA SETTLEMENT, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF HEBRON.



WE ENTERED THE OLD CITY AND THE ATMOSPHERE WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. THE STREETS WERE PRACTICALLY DESERTED AND FULL OF RUBBISH.



MANY PALESTINIAN BUSINESSES ARE OBLIGED TO CLOSE; OTHERS OPERATE UNDER RESTRICTED HOURS TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH THE ISRAELI SETTLERS WHO LIVE ABOVE. AND IN SOME AREAS, OVERHEAD WIRE MESH AND NETTING PROTECTS PASSERS-BY FROM THE RUBBISH THAT IS THROWN OUT.

THE NEXT MORNING WE RETURNED TO JERUSALEM WITH FARID, PROJECT MANAGER FOR WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH).



WE SEIZED THE CHANCE TO MAKE A STOP IN BETHLEHEM.



I SAW THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, WHICH HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED UPON THE SPOT BELIEVED TO BE CHRIST'S BIRTHPLACE.



WE WERE STILL DOING THE TOURIST THING AND WENT SOUVENIR HUNTING...



I SIMPLY HAD TO GET A NATIVITY SET FROM BETHLEHEM CITY.

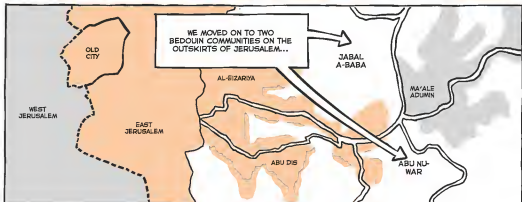
HEY GUYS! IF YOU WANT SOME GOOD PHOTOS, YOU'LL GET THE BEST SIGHTS OF BETHLEHEM FROM INSIDE THAT WORKSHOP...



ENJOY THE VIEW!!



WE MOVED ON TO TWO BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF JERUSALEM...



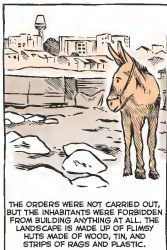
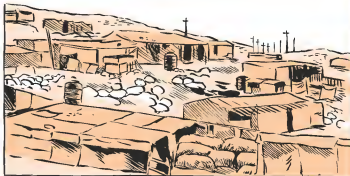


# A VIEW FROM THE EAST

Near Jerusalem



ABU NUWAR IS THE LARGEST BEDOUIN COMMUNITY IN EAST JERUSALEM. MORE THAN 700 OF ITS INHABITANTS COME FROM 113 FAMILIES. THEY ARRIVED HERE IN 1967 AFTER THE SIX-DAY WAR. THROUGHOUT 1997-1998, AND AGAIN IN 2005, DEMOLITION ORDERS WERE ISSUED FOR EVERY BUILDING IN THE COMMUNITY.



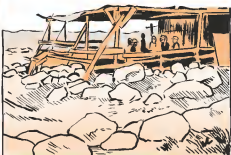
THE ORDERS WERE NOT CARRIED OUT, BUT THE INHABITANTS WERE FORBIDDEN FROM BUILDING ANYTHING AT ALL. THE LANDSCAPE IS MADE UP OF FLIMSAY HUTS MADE OF WOOD, TIN, AND STRIPS OF RAGS AND PLASTIC.

ABU EMAD IBSISAT IS THE SPOKESPERSON FOR THE COMMUNITY...

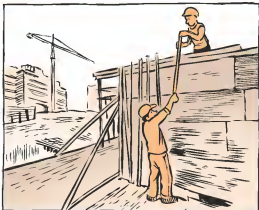
THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES HAVE OFFERED TO RELOCATE US, SO THAT WE ABANDON THE AREA AND THEY CAN EXPAND THE COLONIAL SETTLEMENTS.



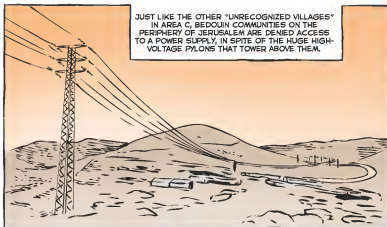
WE ARE DETERMINED TO KEEP RESISTING AND STAY ON THIS LAND. OUR GOATS AND SHEEP NEED OPEN SPACES AND THIS IS OUR WAY OF LIFE.



THE RESIDENTS MAKE DAIRY PRODUCTS FOR SALE AND BARTER. IN FACT, THEY CAN ONLY DISTRIBUTE THOSE PRODUCTS VIA PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND PRIVATE CARS TO ABU DIS AND AL-EIZARIYA. THEY CANNOT SELL IN EAST JERUSALEM AS THEY HAD DONE IN THE PAST; THE FACT THAT NOW THE CITY LIES BEHIND THE WALL HAS HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR EARNINGS.

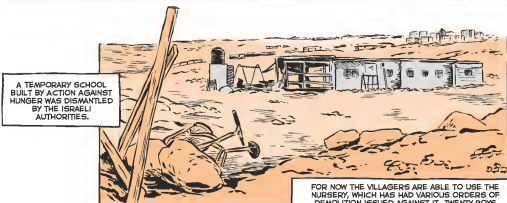


IN A STRANGE PARADOX, MANY RESIDENTS HAD ORIGINALLY WORKED AS CHEAP LABOR IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SETTLEMENTS. TODAY, ISRAELI AUTHORITIES NO LONGER APPROVE THE MAJORITY OF WORK PERMITS. THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS REACHED 80%.



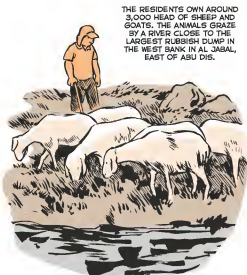
JUST LIKE THE OTHER "UNRECOGNIZED VILLAGES" IN AREA C, BEDOUIN COMMUNITIES ON THE PERIPHERY OF JERUSALEM ARE DENIED ACCESS TO A POWER SUPPLY, IN SPITE OF THE HUGE HIGH-VOLTAGE PYLONS THAT TOWER ABOVE THEM.

THE ELECTRIC CONNECTION WITH AL-EIZARIYA, THEIR VILLAGE, HAS TO BE DONE SECRETLY AT NIGHT, WHEN THE RESIDENTS ARE NO LONGER UNDER SURVEILLANCE.

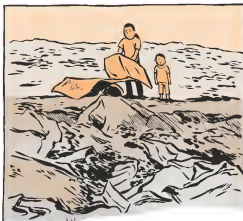


A TEMPORARY SCHOOL BUILT BY ACTION AGAINST HUNGER WAS DISMANTLED BY THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES.

FOR NOW THE VILLAGERS ARE ABLE TO USE THE NURSERY, WHICH HAS HAD VARIOUS ORDERS OF DEMOLITION ISSUED AGAINST IT. TWENTY BOYS AND GIRLS ATTEND SCHOOL THERE.



THE RESIDENTS OWN AROUND 3,000 HEAD OF SHEEP AND GOATS. THE ANIMALS GRAZE BY A RIVER CLOSE TO THE LARGEST RUBBISH DUMP IN THE WEST BANK IN AL JABAL, EAST OF ABU DIS.



IN FACT, THIS PLACE, CLOSE TO WHERE THE TRASH IS BURIED, IS THE PROPOSED SITE FOR THE RELOCATION OF THE ABU NWAR BEDOUINS. OTHERS WERE DISPLACED THERE IN 1997. THE DUMP GIVES OFF AN UNPLEASANT SMELL PARTICULARLY AT NIGHT, WHICH CAUSES RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS AMONG THE POPULATION.



JABAL AL-BABA IS ANOTHER POPULATION UNDER THREAT. OVER 300 PEOPLE FROM 56 FAMILIES SETTLED HERE AFTER THE 1948 WAR, WITH THE CONSENT OF THE LANDOWNERS—THE RESIDENTS OF AL-EIZARIYA.



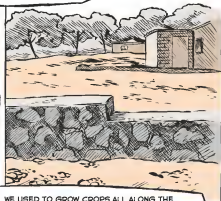
KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN GAVE SOME OF THIS LAND AS A GIFT TO POPE PAUL VI IN 1964 DURING THE POPE'S HISTORIC PILGRIMAGE...



...SO JABAL AL-BABA, WHICH IN FACT MEANS "POPE'S MOUNTAIN," IS THE PROPERTY OF THE VATICAN.

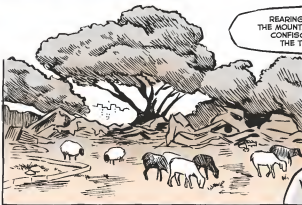
WE SPOKE TO ATALLAH MAZARAA, THE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE.

IN 1982, THEY CUT OUR ACCESS TO WATER FROM AL-EIZARIYA AND BUILT A WALL AROUND THE MOUNTAIN. THEY TRIED TO SHUT THE COMMUNITY OFF COMPLETELY, BUT WE MANAGED TO STOP THEM AND THEY LEFT US ONE SMALL ENTRANCE.



WE USED TO GROW CROPS ALL ALONG THE RIVERBED SLOPES, BUT THE BARRIER HAS MADE THAT IMPOSSIBLE NOW.

REARING LIVESTOCK IS OUR MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME. THE MOUNTAIN HAS MANY NATURAL RESOURCES, BUT THEY'VE CONFISCATED LARGE AREAS OF PASTURE AND LIMITED THE TERRITORY WHERE OUR ANIMALS CAN GRAZE.



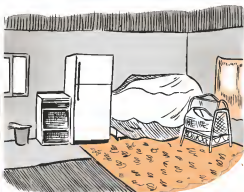
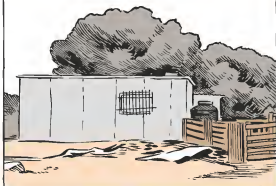
THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT HERE IS EXTREMELY HIGH, THE SAME AS IN ABU NUWAR, BECAUSE THEY'VE STOPPED GIVING OUT WORK PERMITS.



IN SPITE OF THESE TOUGH CONDITIONS, THE COMMUNITY FIGHTS TO MAINTAIN THEIR TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE AND STAY ON THE MOUNTAIN. THEY DON'T WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO BE LEFT WITH NOWHERE TO LIVE.



MAZARAA LIVES WITH HIS FAMILY IN A TEMPORARY HOUSE DONATED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. IT TAKES A WEEK TO ASSEMBLE ONE OF THESE HOMES.



THE PANELS PROVIDE SUFFICIENT INSULATION FROM THE COLD.

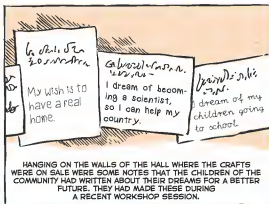
NEARBY WE SAW DEBRIS FROM THE LAST FEW DEMOLITIONS WHICH HAPPENED FOUR MONTHS AGO.



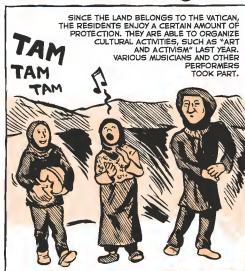
FOR YEARS, THE RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN LIVING UNDER THE CONSTANT THREAT OF DEMOLITION OF THEIR HOMES, THE RISK OF FORCIBLE TRANSFER AND THE PROHIBITION OF BUILDING PERMITS.



THE WOMEN DO NOT WORK OUTSIDE OF THE AREA, BUT THEIR HANDICRAFTS AND EMBROIDERY WORK ARE BEING PROMOTED. MANY CRAFTS ARE BASED ON THE WORK OF NONE OTHER THAN BANKSY. THE ITEMS ARE SOLD TO TOURISTS AND DIPLOMATS WHO COME TO VISIT AND HELP TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES.



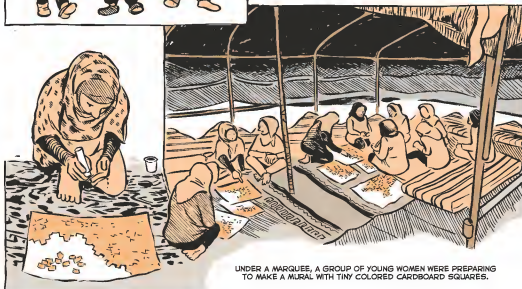
HANGING ON THE WALLS OF THE HALL WHERE THE CRAFTS WERE ON SALE WERE SOME NOTES THAT THE CHILDREN OF THE COMMUNITY HAD WRITTEN ABOUT THEIR DREAMS FOR A BETTER FUTURE. THEY HAD MADE THESE DURING A RECENT WORKSHOP SESSION.



SINCE THE LAND BELONGS TO THE VATICAN, THE RESIDENTS ENJOY A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PROTECTION. THEY ARE ABLE TO ORGANIZE CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS "ART AND ACTIVISM" LAST YEAR. VARIOUS MUSICIANS AND OTHER PERFORMERS TOOK PART.



DRIVEN BY CURIOSITY, WE WENT TO SEE A TENT WHOSE ENTRANCE WAS MARKED BY THE PALESTINE FLAG AND THE VATICAN FLAG. AN EXOTIC MATCH, TO SAY THE LEAST.

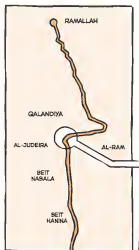


UNDER A MARQUEE, A GROUP OF YOUNG WOMEN WERE PREPARING TO MAKE A MURAL WITH TINY COLORED CARDBOARD SQUARES.



# JOURNEY TO THE NORTH

From Ramallah to Nablus



THAT AFTERNOON WE WENT TO RAMALLAH, THE CLOSEST TOWN TO JERUSALEM, LYING 15 KILOMETERS TO THE NORTH. TO REACH IT YOU HAVE TO CROSS THE CHECKPOINT AT GALANDIYA, ONE OF THE BUSIEST AND MOST COMPLEX IN PALESTINE. IT'S THE SCENE OF MANY VIOLENT CLASHES.



DUE TO THE HUGE TRAFFIC JAMS, MANY PALESTINIANS TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SET UP STALLS NEARBY.



ARGH! CAN WE GET OUT HERE PLEASE?

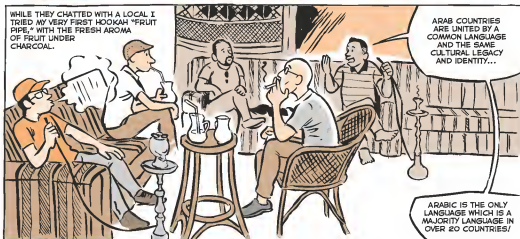
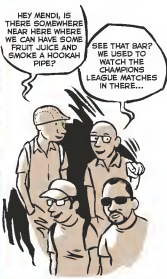
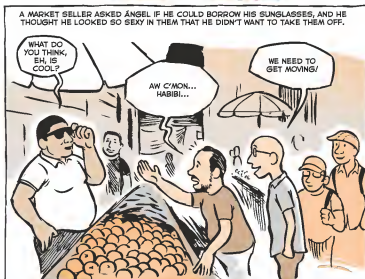
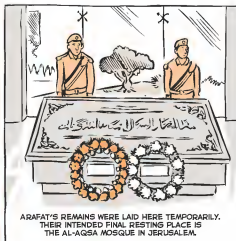
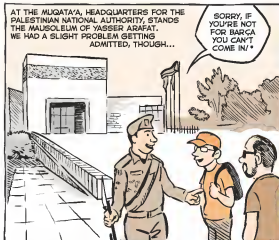
IT TOOK AN HOUR AND A HALF TO GET THERE.



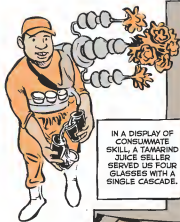
RAMALLAH IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, AND A LARGE NUMBER OF NGOS ARE BASED THERE. HUMANITARIAN WORKERS OF VARIOUS NATIONALITIES LIVE THERE TOO...



...AMONG THEM, MENDI AND ÁNGEL, TWO FRIENDS OF MAX. WE ARRANGED TO MEET UP SO THEY COULD SHOW US THE CITY'S ATTRACTIONS.

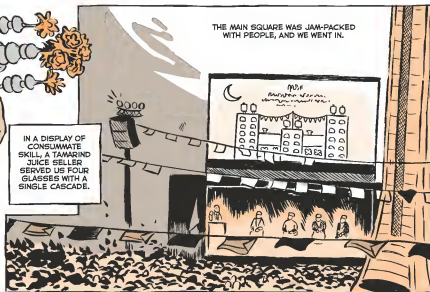


\* ON DISCOVERING THAT WE WERE SPANISH, PEOPLE TENDED TO ASK WHICH TEAM WE SUPPORTED... AND WANTED TO KNOW WHICH WAS BEST, MADRID OR BARGA?



IN A DISPLAY OF CONSUMMATE SKILL, A TAMARIND JUICE SELLER SERVED US FOUR GLASSES WITH A SINGLE CASCADE.

THE MAIN SQUARE WAS JAM-PACKED WITH PEOPLE, AND WE WENT IN.



RAMADAN WAS BEING CELEBRATED WITH A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE.



WE RETURNED LATER THAT NIGHT, CROSSING THE CHECKPOINT AT GALANDIYA ONCE MORE.



MAY I SEE YOUR PASSPORTS, PLEASE?

OH... OF COURSE...

A YOUNG ANGELIC-LOOKING SOLDIER BEARING A HUGE ASSAULT RIFLE CARRIED OUT THE INSPECTION.

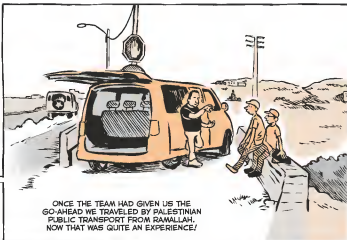


ISRAEL IS ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD IN WHICH COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE APPLIES TO MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE. WOMEN SIGN UP WHEN THEY TURN EIGHTEEN AND THEY SERVE FOR TWO YEARS.





THE NEXT DAY WE WENT TO NABLUS. IT IS THE COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL HEART OF THE NORTHERN WEST BANK.



ONCE THE TEAM HAD GIVEN US THE GO-AHEAD WE TRAVELED BY PALESTINIAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT FROM RAMALLAH. NOW THAT WAS QUITE AN EXPERIENCE!

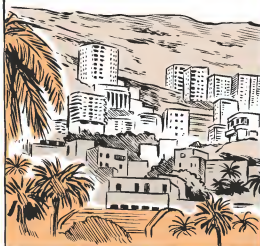
THE CHAUFFEUR FANCIED HIMSELF AS QUITE THE FORMULA 1 DRIVER. THE OTHER PASSENGERS WERE CLEARLY USED TO HIS BREAKNECK SPEEDS.



ON THE WAY, WE SAW AN ACCIDENT INVOLVING A CAR AND A MINIBUS IDENTICAL TO OURS... LUCKILY THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES.



WHAT WAS MOST ASTONISHING ABOUT NABLUS WAS THE VALLEY THAT OVERLOOKED IT, CRAMMED WITH TALL BUILDINGS FROM SIDE TO SIDE.



WE SOAKED IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CITY, EXPLORING THE LITTLE MARKET STREETS WHICH WERE LIVELY WITH CROWDS OF PEOPLE.

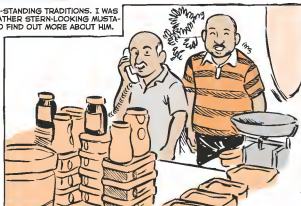


THE SHOP ASSISTANTS WERE GREAT! AS WE NOSED AROUND, THEY INVITED US TO TRY THEIR PRODUCTS FOR FREE.



AND THEY READILY AGREED TO LET US INTO THEIR ESTABLISHMENTS SO THAT WE COULD SEE HOW THEY WORKED BEHIND THE SCENES.

MOST OF THESE WERE FAMILY BUSINESSES WITH LONG-STANDING TRADITIONS. I WAS FASCINATED BY THE BLACK AND WHITE PICTURE OF A RATHER STERN-LOOKING MUSTA-CHOICED GENTLEMAN ON A SHOP SIGN, AND WANTED TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HIM.



AND SO WE MET HIS GREAT-GRANDSON AND GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON! THE IMAGE OF THAT ACCOMPLISHED PALESTINIAN BUSINESSMAN WAS PROUDLY ENBLAZONED ON SCORES OF DIFFERENT PRODUCTS.



AS WE MUNCHED ON SUGARY CREPES, A VERY CHEERFUL LITTLE 10-YEAR-OLD BOY CALLED ABUL CAME UP TO US...

THIS SHOP HAS BEEN GOING FOR OVER 200 YEARS. IT'S ONE OF THE OLDEST IN NABLUS!

SO YOU'RE SPANISH! DO YOU KNOW CRISTIANO RONALDO?



OH, YEAH... HE'S A NEIGHBOR OF MINE IN FACT. ARE YOU FOR REAL MADRID?

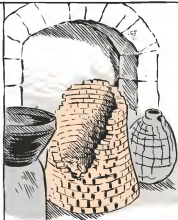
SURE, THEY'RE THE BEST TEAM IN THE WORLD!



ON OUR OUTINGS WE'D SEE INCREDIBLE PHOTOGRAPHIC MONTAGES PRINTED ON POSTERS OR HUGE STRETCHES OF CANVAS. WE GUESSED THAT THESE WERE IMAGES OF PEOPLE CONSIDERED AS MARTYRS.



NABLUS PRODUCES ITS OWN "NABULSI" SOAP, MADE WITH OLIVE OIL, WATER AND SODIUM. ONE OF THE OLDEST INDUSTRIES IN THE WORLD, THE ORIGINS OF THIS PARTICULAR SOAP GO BACK AS FAR AS THE 10TH CENTURY.

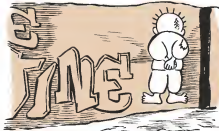


I BOUGHT A BAR OF STRAWBERRY SCENTED SOAP. IT LASTED A GOOD FEW MONTHS!

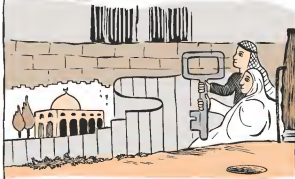


AFTER HOURS OF WALKING, WE NEEDED A BIT OF CHILL-OUT TIME AND WE ENDED UP IN HAMMAM AL-SAMMARA BATHHOUSE. A BATH AND A "RELAXING" MASSAGE LEFT US FEELING AS NEW AGAIN.

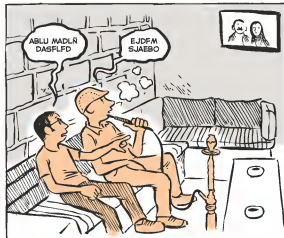
LOST IN THE MAZE-LIKE ALLEYS OF THE OLD QUARTER, WE CAME ACROSS PAINTINGS SYMBOLIZING PALESTINE RESISTANCE.



HANDALA IS ONE OF THE MOST DEFINITIVE ICONS, PRESENT IN MANY STREETS THROUGHOUT THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY. HE WAS CREATED IN 1969 BY A REFUGEE CARTOONIST TO EMBODY THE ABSOLUTE DISPOSSESSION HE WAS EXPERIENCING. HANDALA REPRESENTED THE IDEA THAT HE COULD NOT GROW UP OR TURN AROUND UNTIL HE COULD RETURN TO HIS HOMETOWN. IT WAS NEVER TO BE.



THE KEY OF RETURN IS ANOTHER OF THE GREATEST SYMBOLS FOR PALESTINIANS. MANY REFUGEES STILL KEEP THE KEYS FROM THE HOUSES THAT THEY HAD TO LEAVE NEARLY 70 YEARS AGO, ALWAYS IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL ONE DAY RETURN.



AFTERWARDS WE SMOKED A HOOKAH AND OFFERED RUNNING COMMENTARY ON THE SOAP OPERA WHICH WAS SHOWING ON THE TV AT THE HAMMAM.



# GAZA

A territory under blockade

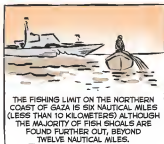
THE NEXT DAY  
WE MADE OUR  
WAY TO THE  
GAZA STRIP.



LITTLE DID WE GUESS, AS WE CONTEMPLATED THE IDYLIC LANDSCAPE  
AROUND THE YAD MORDECHAI KIBBUTZ, THAT ONE OF THE MOST DISTURBING  
PLACES IN THE WORLD WAS JUST THREE KILOMETERS AWAY.



THE GAZA STRIP HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATIONS  
OF POPULATION IN THE WORLD: 1,900,000 PEOPLE LIVE ON A  
TERRITORY 365 SQUARE KILOMETERS IN SIZE. GAZANS HAVE  
SUFFERED A BLOCKADE FOR NEARLY 10 YEARS AND GONE  
THROUGH THREE MAJOR WARS SINCE 2008, THE MOST  
RECENT ONE IN 2014.



THE FISHING LIMIT ON THE NORTHERN  
COAST OF GAZA IS SIX NAUTICAL MILES  
(LESS THAN 10 KILOMETERS) ALTHOUGH  
THE MAJORITY OF FISH SHOALS ARE  
FOUND FURTHER OUT, BEYOND  
TWELVE NAUTICAL MILES.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

NAVIGATION AND FISHING LIMIT

ISRAEL

THE EREZ CROSSING  
IS A CROSSING POINT  
THROUGH THE BORDER  
WITH ISRAEL.

INHABITED AREA  
REFUGEE CAMP

ACCESS-RESTRICTED AREAS



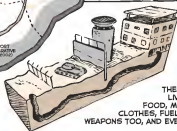
IT IS FORBIDDEN TO GO WITHIN  
A 100-METER BUFFER ZONE  
AROUND THE WALL.

THE SECURITY ZONE MEASURES  
100-300 METERS. ACCESS IS  
ONLY PERMITTED TO FARMERS GOING  
ON FOOT.

THE BLOCKADE IMPOSED ON THE GAZA STRIP HAS  
LED PALESTINIANS TO DIG VARIOUS TUNNELS.  
MANY OF THESE TUNNELS WERE FLOODED BY  
EGYPT, AND OTHERS WERE CLOSED BY ISRAEL.

EGYPT

THE RAFAH BORDER  
CROSSING IS A CROSS-  
ING POINT THROUGH  
THE BORDER WITH EGYPT.



ESSENTIAL  
ITEMS WERE  
SMUGGLED  
THROUGH  
THESE TUNNELS:  
LIVESTOCK,  
FOOD, MEDICINE,  
CLOTHES, FUEL... BUT  
WEAPONS TOO, AND EVEN LIONS!

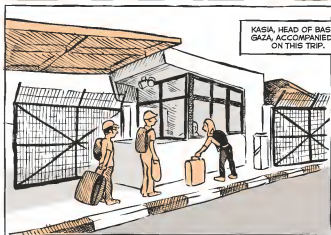


THE HUGE TERMINAL-STYLE BUILDING ON THE EREZ BORDER WAS BUILT IN 2007 AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WALL. IT IS REMINISCENT OF AN AIRPORT, ALTHOUGH I SENSED IT WAS NOT QUITE THE SAME THING....

BY SEPTEMBER 2000, JUST BEFORE THE SECOND INTIFADA, 26,000 PALESTINIAN WORKERS WERE TRAVELING DAILY THROUGH EREZ.



IN 2015, THE AVERAGE DAILY FOOTFALL WAS 475, 1.83% OF THAT OF 15 YEARS BEFORE.



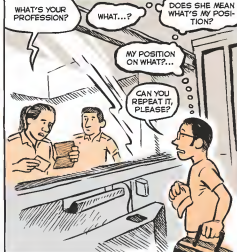
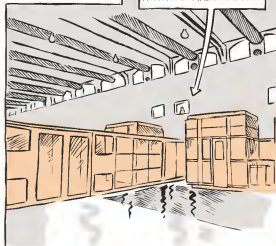
KASIA, HEAD OF BASE IN GAZA, ACCOMPANIED US ON THIS TRIP.



INSIDE, WE FOUND THAT THE CONTROL BOOTHS WERE EMPTY. IT SEEMED THERE WASN'T A SINGLE SOUL TO BE SEEN IN THAT HUGE DESERTED SPACE...

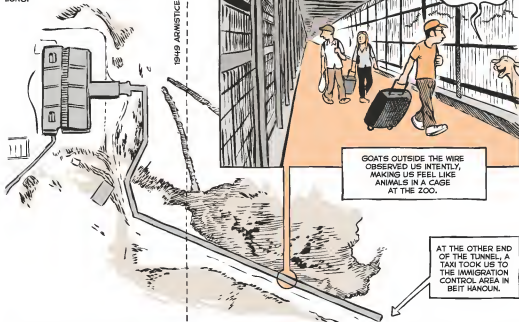
BUT WE WERE NOT ALONE. SOMEONE WAS OBSERVING US FROM AN UPSTAIRS WINDOW...

FIRST YOU HAVE TO PASS THROUGH A STRICT ISRAELI CONTROL, WHERE YOU ARE QUESTIONED ON THE MOTIVE FOR YOUR VISIT, THE LENGTH OF YOUR STAY OR ANYTHING PERSONAL. I WAS ANXIOUS NOT TO PUT MY FOOT IN IT; THE LANGUAGE BARRIER WAS ENOUGH OF A PROBLEM.



ONCE WE WERE FREE OF THE TERMINAL WE HAD TO WALK ALONG A WIRED CORRIDOR NEARLY TWO KILOMETERS LONG.

1949 ARMISTICE BORDER



GOATS OUTSIDE THE WIRE OBSERVED US INTENTLY, MAKING US FEEL LIKE ANIMALS IN A CAGE AT THE ZOO.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE TUNNEL, A TAXI TOOK US TO THE IMMIGRATION CONTROL AREA IN BEIT HANOUN.

THE FIRST SECURITY LEVEL, "KHAMSA-KHAMSA" WHICH MEANS "FIVE-FIVE," CORRESPONDS TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES...



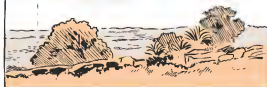
THE NEXT LEVEL, "ARBA-ARBA" ("FOUR-FOUR") IS THE HAMAS GOVERNMENT CONTROL.



A CAR FROM ACTION AGAINST HUNGER CAME TO COLLECT US.

ON THE ROAD, WE HAPPENED TO NOTICE A WHITE GLOBE HIGH UP IN THE SKY.

IT WAS ONE OF THE ISRAELI SURVEILLANCE BALLOONS FOUND ALONG THE BORDER. EQUIPPED WITH SOPHISTICATED PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT, THE BALLOONS ARE USED AS A STEALTH METHOD TO DETERMINE THE POSITION OF ENEMY THREATS.



THEY CAN REACH HEIGHTS OF UP TO 300 METERS AND COVER ANY TERRITORY NOT VISIBLE FROM GROUND LEVEL.

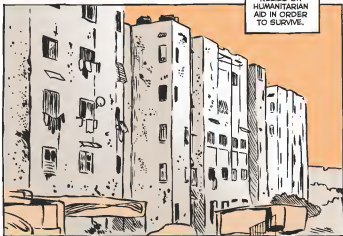


WE WERE LEFT  
SPEECHLESS  
BY WHAT WE  
SAW OUT OF  
THE WINDOW.



CHILDREN MAKE UP HALF OF A  
POPULATION OF TWO MILLION  
INHABITANTS. THOSE WHO ARE  
UNDER TEN YEARS OLD HAVE  
SPENT THEIR ENTIRE LIVES  
LIVING UNDER THE BLOCKADE.

80% OF THE  
POPULATION  
RELIES ON  
HUMANITARIAN  
AID IN ORDER  
TO SURVIVE.





OF THE 500,000 PEOPLE WHO WERE DISPLACED DURING THE 2014 CONFLICT, AROUND 100,000 SUFFERED DAMAGE TO THEIR HOMES, AND 35,000 REMAIN HOMELESS TODAY.

153,200  
HOUSES WERE  
LEFT PARTIALLY  
DESTROYED.

OF THE 11,000  
HOUSES THAT WERE  
LEFT COMPLETELY  
DESTROYED, JUST  
12% HAVE BEEN  
REBUILT.

252 SCHOOLS  
SUFFERED  
DAMAGE. SEVEN  
WERE COMPLETELY  
DESTROYED.

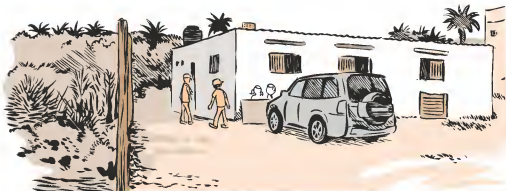
78 HOSPITALS WERE  
ALSO AFFECTED,  
FOUR OF THEM LEFT  
IN COMPLETE RUINS.

DURING THE 51 DAYS OF THE WAR, THERE WERE 2,251 PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES:  
735 OF THE DEAD BELONGED TO ARMED GROUPS, 1,460 WERE CIVILIAN,  
AND 56 WERE UNCONFIRMED. THERE WERE 11,230 INJURED,  
900 OF THOSE LEFT PERMANENTLY DISABLED.

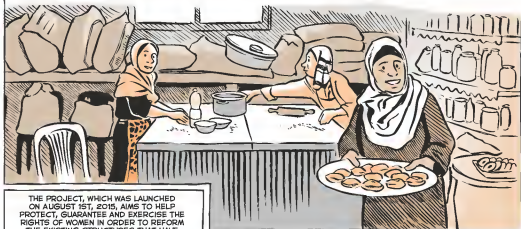
566 OF THE VICTIMS  
WERE CHILDREN AND  
299 WERE WOMEN.

ON THE ISRAELI SIDE,  
THERE WERE A TOTAL OF  
72 DEATHS: 66 WERE  
MILITARY CASUALTIES  
AND SIX WERE CIVILIAN.

WE WENT TO ALSAWARHA IN THE CENTRAL AREA OF THE STRIP, TO SEE A PROJECT BEING IMPLEMENTED FOR WOMEN OF THIS RURAL AREA...

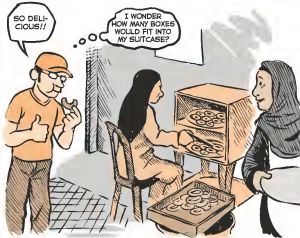


THE GOAL OF THE PROJECT WAS TO ENSURE WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WORK, AND TO PROMOTE THE VALUE OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THEIR LOCAL ECONOMY. IN THIS WAY WOMEN ARE ABLE TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS.



THE PROJECT, WHICH WAS LAUNCHED ON AUGUST 1ST, 2015, AIMS TO HELP PROTECT, GUARANTEE AND EXERCISE THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ORDER TO REFORM THE EXISTING STRUCTURES THAT HAVE BEEN PERPETUATING GENDER INEQUALITY.

WOMEN IN THE AREA REPRESENT JUST 19% OF THE WORKFORCE.



FATMA IS THE PROJECT COORDINATOR.

THIS ACTIVITY ENRICHES BOTH THE ECONOMY AND LIFE AT A PERSONAL LEVEL: ENJOYING THE SENSE OF SOCIAL RECOGNITION THAT COMES WITH WORK; SHARING A COMMON SPACE WITH OTHER WOMEN; FEELING USEFUL...



WE HELP TO INCREASE THEIR CLIENT BASE AND WE TEACH THEM TO UPHOLD THEIR RIGHTS WHEN DEALING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

SOME OF THE WOMEN ARE SYRIAN REFUGEE WIDOWS, AND THEY ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE.



WE MET OMAR, A NURSE BASED IN THE AREA WORKING TO HELP CHILDREN.

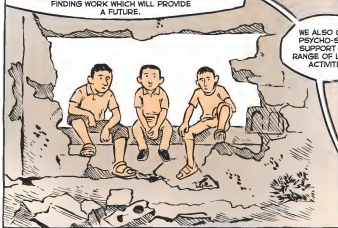
WE'RE CARRYING OUT HEMOGLOBIN TESTS ON CHILDREN WHO ARE BETWEEN 5 AND 11, TO DETECT ANEMIA.

THE CHILDREN NEED VITAMINS AND IRON AND WE GIVE THEM A SUPPLEMENT TO REPLACE THE NUTRIENTS THEY'VE LOST.



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IS AT 60%-ONE OF THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN THE WORLD. IT'S VITAL THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POSITIVE MINDSET AND THAT WE GUIDE THEM TOWARDS FINDING WORK WHICH WILL PROVIDE A FUTURE.

WE ALSO OFFER PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT AND A RANGE OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES.

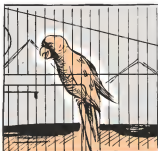


THERE IS A LOT OF TALENT AROUND HERE. LOOK AT THE PIECE THAT ONE OF MY KIDS EMBROIDERED YESTERDAY!

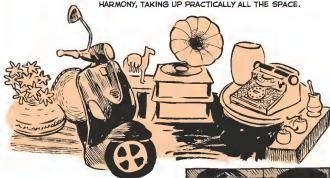
THE HEADQUARTERS AND GUEST HOUSE FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER WERE IN THE CITY OF GAZA, ON A FLOOR IN A PLACE CALLED THE DREAM BUILDING.



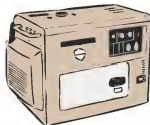
THE OWNER OF THE BLOCK WAS A REAL ANIMAL LOVER, AND HIS PORCH WALLS WERE LINED WITH DOZENS OF CAGES OF EXOTIC BIRDS AND AQUARIUMS.



HE WAS ALSO A VERY KEEN COLLECTOR OF ANTIQUES AND KITSCH, ALL OF IT EXHIBED IN THE HALL. IT WAS ASSEMBLED IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER OR HARMONY, TAKING UP PRACTICALLY ALL THE SPACE.



IN OUR LIVING ROOM WE FOUND A GENERATOR—AN INDISPENSABLE PIECE OF EQUIPMENT IN GAZA IN ORDER TO COPE WITH THE FREQUENT POWER BLACKOUTS, SOME LASTING SEVERAL HOURS DAILY.



WE WERE WARNED THAT TAP WATER WAS NOT DRINKABLE AND THAT IT SHOULD ONLY BE USED TO WASH.



STOCKED IN THE KITCHEN LARDER WERE PROVISIONS FOR A WHOLE MONTH.

AND IN ANOTHER CUPBOARD, I FOUND SOME MYSTERIOUS BAGS...



IT WAS A STORE OF HELMETS AND BULLETPROOF VESTS.

SO SLICK! FITS LIKE A GLOVE, DON'T YOU THINK?



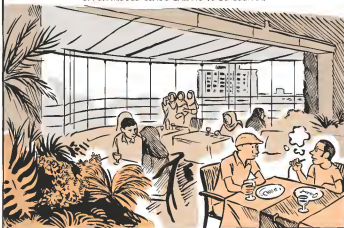
KASIA WANTED US TO SEE A MORE GENTRIFIED, LESS FAMILIAR ASPECT OF GAZA, SO SHE RECOMMENDED A RESTAURANT FOR DINNER.



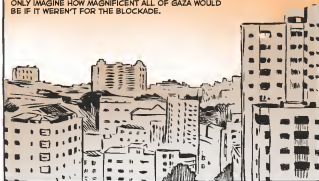
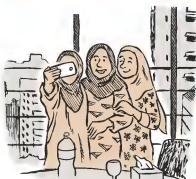
LEVEL UP RESTAURANT, ON THE TERRACE OF ZAFER TOWER, WAS RIGHT IN THE CENTER OF GAZA.



WITH ITS STUNNING VIEWS OF THE SEA AND CITY, YOU COULD UNDERSTAND WHY THIS RESTAURANT HAS BECOME ONE OF THE TRENDIEST PLACES FOR UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS GAZANS TO BE SEEN IN.



IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SUCH BEAUTIFUL SIGHTS COULD EXIST SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE DESOLATE CONDITIONS WE'D WITNESSED A FEW SHORT HOURS BEFORE... AND WE COULD ONLY IMAGINE HOW MAGNIFICENT ALL OF GAZA WOULD BE IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE BLOCKADE.



FIVE A.M. IN THE DREAM BUILDING...

Z Z Z

YA ALLAAH

HUAH BARUU

ARGH... THE CALL TO PRAYER... I

NOW WHY DID I GO TO BED SO LATE LAST NIGHT...

THEY'VE  
FINISHED!

AT LAST. NOW I CAN  
ENJOY SNOOZING  
UNTIL EIGHT  
O'CLOCK....!

NO<sub>2</sub>...

THIS CAN'T  
BE HAPPEN-  
ING....



AFTER A SHOWER I'D NEVER FEEL EXACTLY SQUEAKY CLEAN, BECAUSE OF THE HIGH SALINITY AND CONTAMINATION IN THE WATER...



MY SKIN FELT STICKY AS IF I'D TAKEN A DIP IN THE SEA.



WE HAD AGREED TO MEET THAT MORNING WITH SAMER, A HYGIENE PROMOTER, TO VISIT THE WATER PROJECTS.



SOME NIGHT, HUH? WHAT WITH THE MUEZZIN SINGING AND THE ROAD WORK OUTSIDE I HAVEN'T SLEPT A WINK.

WE NEITHER... BEST OF ALL, THE NOISE STOPPED AS SOON AS I GOT IN THE SHOWER. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN MAKING THE MOST OF THE COOLER HOURS OF THE DAY, NO POINT OTHERWISE...



BY THE WAY... YOU HAD A GOOD BREAKFAST, RIGHT? BECAUSE WE'RE OUT FOR THE WHOLE DAY...

NAH, JUST HAD A BISCUIT IN A HURRY. I'LL NIBBLE SOMETHING ON THE WAY.



GOOD LUCK WITH THAT... TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF RAMADAN AND THEY PROBABLY WON'T BE SERVING FOOD ANYWHERE. EATING IN PUBLIC IS HIGHLY FROWNED UPON, IT'S CONSIDERED OFFENSIVE TO MUSLIMS.

OH NO, I FORGOT!!

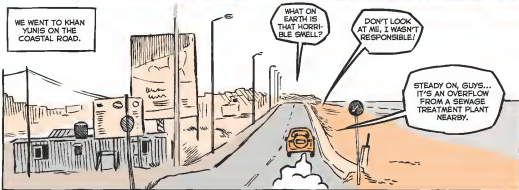


WE WENT TO KHAN YUNIS ON THE COASTAL ROAD.

WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT HORRIBLE SWELL?

DON'T LOOK AT ME, I WASN'T RESPONSIBLE!

STEADY ON, GUYS... IT'S AN OVERFLOW FROM A SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT NEARBY.





IN GAZA, ACCESS TO WATER IS A MORE URGENT PROBLEM THAN IN THE WEST BANK, BECAUSE THE LEVEL OF SALINATION RENDERS THE AQUIFER UNUSABLE. BLACK PLASTIC STORAGE TANKS ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE WATER. GAZANS HAVE TO BUY THEM FROM PRIVATE SELLERS.



WATER IS A HUGE EXPENDITURE FOR HOMES; FOR MANY, THE COST EATS INTO ONE THIRD OF THE FAMILY BUDGET.

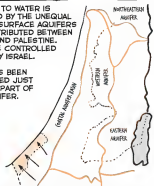
THE PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY CAN BE USED TO WASH WITH, BUT IT IS NOT FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH LEVELS OF SALINITY AND CONTAMINATION.



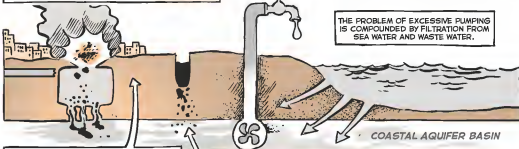
THE ELEVATED QUANTITIES OF NITRATE AND SALT CAN HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS ON HEALTH.

ACCESS TO WATER IS DICTATED BY THE UNEQUAL WAY SUBSURFACE AQUIFERS ARE DISTRIBUTED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE. THEY ARE CONTROLLED MAINLY BY ISRAEL.

GAZA HAS BEEN ALLOCATED JUST A SMALL PART OF THE AQUIFER.



AS A CONSEQUENCE, GAZANS HAVE BEEN EXTRACTING MORE WATER THAN CAN BE REPLENISHED.



THE PROBLEM OF EXCESSIVE PUMPING IS COMPOUNDED BY FILTRATION FROM SEA WATER AND WASTE WATER.

THE WAR WREAKED HAVOC ON THE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AT AN ESTIMATED COST OF \$34 MILLION (AROUND £27.5 MILLION).

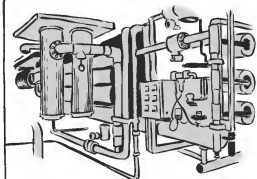


60% OF THE POPULATION HAS NO ACCESS TO A SEWERAGE SYSTEM. THEY USE CESSPITS TO THROW AWAY WASTE WATER AND RAW SEWAGE. THIS CONTAMINATION ALSO EVENTUALLY FILTERS THROUGH TO THE AQUIFER.



CESSPITS ARE SOURCES OF DISEASE, PUTRID SMELLS AND MOSQUITOES. THERE ARE MILLIONS OF PITS IN GAZA. EVERY MONTH THEY OVERFLOW, AND DESLUDGING TRUCKS ARE CALLED IN TO EMPTY THEM.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY JUST THREE OPERATIONAL SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS IN GAZA. THE EQUIPMENT IS OBSOLETE AND WORKS INEFFICIENTLY BECAUSE OF THE POWER CUTS.

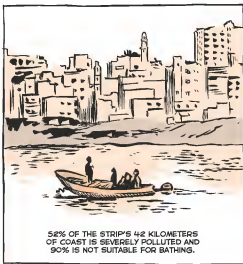


THE BLOCKADE RESTRICTS IMPORTS OF VITAL MATERIALS SUCH AS GENERATORS, FUEL, AND CHEMICAL PRODUCTS, AND LIMITS ENTRY INTO GAZA BY EXPERTS WHO COULD PROVIDE A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.



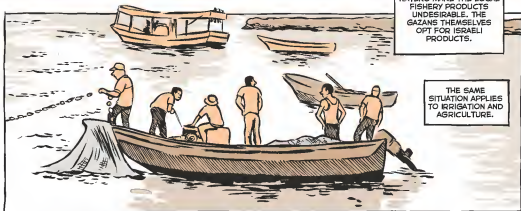
RESTRICTIONS ON THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS LIMIT THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY THAT COULD BE USED TO PROCESS WASTE WATER.

AS A CONSEQUENCE OF AN INADEQUATE SEWERAGE SYSTEM AND LACK OF FUEL FOR EQUIPMENT, 100,000 CUBIC METERS OF PARTIALLY TREATED WATER FLOW INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA EVERY DAY. GRADUALLY THE SMELL BECOMES INTOLERABLE.



52% OF THE STRIP'S 42 KILOMETERS OF COAST IS SEVERELY POLLUTED AND 90% IS NOT SUITABLE FOR BATHING.

THIS HAS A VERY SERIOUS IMPACT ON THE FISHING INDUSTRY. OVER HALF OF THE 4,000 FISHERMEN IN GAZA LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE\*, BECAUSE MARINE LIFE CANNOT SURVIVE IN SUCH A POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT.



THE CONTAMINATED WATERS MAKE THE LOCAL FISHERY PRODUCTS UNDESIRABLE. THE GAZANS THEMSELVES OPT FOR ISRAELI PRODUCTS.

THE SAME SITUATION APPLIES TO IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE.

\* THERE IS, APPARENTLY, ONLY ONE FISHERWOMAN IN GAZA.

AROUND 70% OF RAINWATER IS LOST DOWN THE DRAIN. THE LACK OF ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HARVESTING RAINWATER IS CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.



THE REMAINING WATER TRIGGERS FLOODS IN WHICH CLEAN WATER MIXES WITH OVERFLOWING SEWAGE.

SAWER SHOWED US SEVERAL JOINT INITIATIVES BEING UNDERTAKEN WITH THE COASTAL MUNICIPALITIES WATER UTILITY (CMWU) AND THE PALESTINIAN WATER AUTHORITY (PWA). THESE ENTITIES PROVIDE PUBLIC SERVICES, SANITATION AND HYGIENE, AND THEY ARE IN CHARGE OF TECHNICAL DESIGN AND COORDINATION WITH NGOS.



SECTIONS OF NEW SEWERAGE PIPEWORK ARE BEING INSTALLED, AS WELL AS SEWER CONNECTIONS TO HOMES IN AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN USING CESSPITS, SUCH AS GAZA AND KHAN YUNIS.

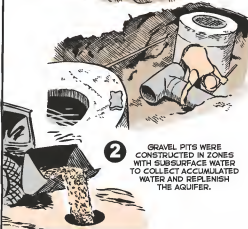
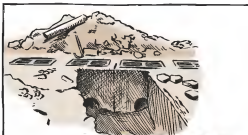
FINALLY, SAWER TOOK US TO VARIOUS PUMPING STATIONS AND DESALINATION PLANTS IN KHAN YUNIS...

THIS IS THE DEEPEST POINT IN THE VALLEY. 1200 FAMILIES ARE NOW ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF A NEW PUMPING SYSTEM WHICH WAS INSTALLED TO PREVENT WATER STAGNATION.

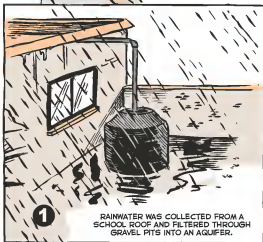




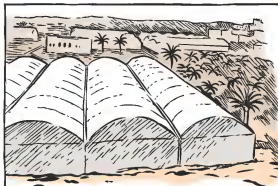
THREE RAINWATER HARVESTING METHODS HAVE BEEN PLOTTED SUCCESSFULLY. THEY WILL REDUCE THE RISK OF FLOODING AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF SUBSURFACE WATER.



GRAVEL PITS WERE CONSTRUCTED IN ZONES WITH SUBSURFACE WATER TO COLLECT ACCUMULATED WATER AND REPLENISH THE AQUIFER.



RAINWATER WAS COLLECTED FROM A SCHOOL ROOF AND FILTERED THROUGH GRAVEL PITS INTO AN AQUIFER.



WATER WAS HARVESTED THROUGH A PIPING SYSTEM ON GREENHOUSE ROOFS...



...AND THE PIPES WERE LATER STORED IN COVERED TANKS FOR REUSE.



ANY OVERFLOWS WOULD REPLENISH THE AQUIFER THROUGH FILTER HOLES DRILLED INTO THE GROUND.

SAMEER, CAN WE MAKE A BATHROOM STOP SOMEWHERE?

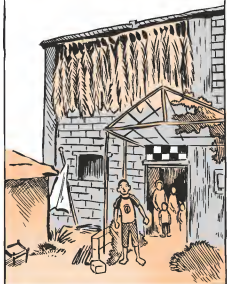


THANKS TO THE FILTRATION SYSTEMS, I WAS BEGINNING TO HAVE PROBLEMS OF MY OWN...



WE MOVED ON TO THE BANI SUHEILA NEIGHBORHOOD IN KHAN YUNIS. THIS AREA SUFFERED THE WORST OF THE BOMBARDMENTS IN THE 2014 CONFLICT.

AHMED AND HIS FAMILY LIVE IN ONE OF THE HOUSES THAT WERE PARTIALLY DESTROYED DURING THE CONFLICT...



I CAN'T WORK BECAUSE OF MY ARTHRITIS AND I RELY ON NSOS AND THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS FOR HELP. I HAVE MANY DEBTS BECAUSE OF THE COST OF TRAVEL AND THE CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING.



MY PRIORITY IS TO FINISH BUILDING THE HOUSE. WE RECEIVE HELP FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, BUT WE STILL NEED DOORS AND A POWER SUPPLY. WE CAN'T AFFORD A GENERATOR...



WHEREVER WE WENT, PEOPLE'S GENEROSITY AND HOSPITALITY NEVER FAILED TO ASTONISH US. THEY OFFERED THEIR TIME AND WHATEVER FEW RESOURCES THEY HAD.

EVERYTHING WAS DONE WITH A SMILE, PERHAPS IN THE HOPE THAT THEIR WORDS WOULD COUNT FOR SOMETHING.

HAMOUD'S HOME WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED BY THE BOMBINGS. THE FAMILY WAS FORCED TO MOVE TO THIS EMPTY PATCH OF GROUND AFTER THE WAR.

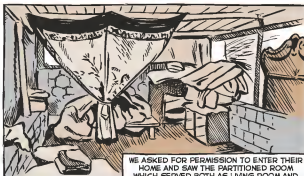


HIS WIFE GREETED US, AND THE CHILDREN GRADUALLY VENTURED OUT.

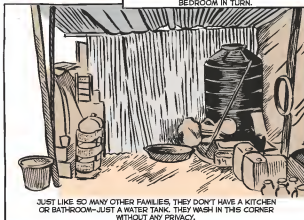
MY HUSBAND HAS BEEN OUT OF WORK FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND WE HAVE NO RESOURCES LEFT. WE RELY ON CHARITY.



I WONDERED WHERE HAMOUD WAS; HIS WIFE SAID THAT HE HAD GONE TO THE MARKET TO GATHER LEFTOVER FOOD THAT HADN'T BEEN SOLD.



WE ASKED FOR PERMISSION TO ENTER THEIR HOME AND SAW THE PARTITIONED ROOM WHICH SERVED BOTH AS LIVING ROOM AND BEDROOM IN TURN.



JUST LIKE SO MANY OTHER FAMILIES, THEY DON'T HAVE A KITCHEN OR BATHROOM—JUST A WATER TANK. THEY WASH IN THIS CORNER WITHOUT ANY PRIVACY.



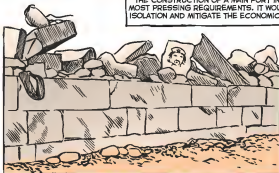
WE RETURNED TO GAZA CITY, THROUGH THE PORT. FOR 3,000 YEARS, THIS WAS THE GATEWAY BETWEEN AFRICA AND ASIA, EXPORTS OF PERFUME, TEXTILES, GRAINS AND SPICES FLOWED FROM HERE.



TODAY, THE PORT IS TOO SMALL TO ACCOMMODATE BIG CONTAINER SHIPS AND IT IS MAINLY USED BY FISHERMEN.



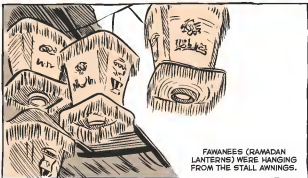
THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MAIN PORT IN GAZA IS ONE OF PALESTINE'S MOST PRESSING REQUIREMENTS. IT WOULD HELP TO END THE STATE OF ISOLATION AND MITIGATE THE ECONOMIC TROUBLES SUFFERED IN GAZA.



WE STROLLED THROUGH AL-ZAMIYA MARKET, RIGHT IN THE HEART OF THE CAPITAL, TO SEE HOW GAZANS PREPARED FOR EID AL-FITR—THE END OF RAMADAN.

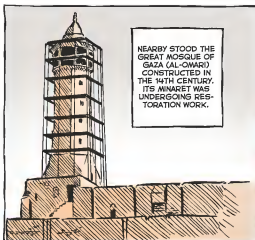


WE SAW A LOCAL TV NEWS REPORTER ASKING PASSERS-BY WHAT THEY WERE PUTTING IN THEIR BASKETS FOR THE CELEBRATION.

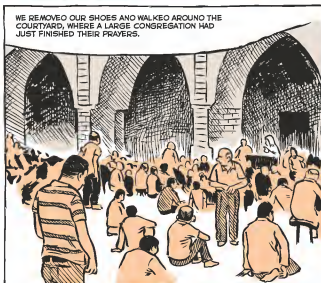


FAWANEES (RAMADAN LANTERNS) WERE HANGING FROM THE STALL AWNINGS.





DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR THE MOSQUE WAS BOMBARDED BY THE BRITISH, WHO WERE ATTACKING OTTOMAN POSITIONS IN GAZA. THE SUPREME MUSLIM COUNCIL COMPLETED RESTORATION OF THE MOSQUE IN 1927.



FOR MANY IN GAZA, THE MOSQUE SERVES AS A SOURCE OF EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT.



ON THE WAY BACK TO THE CAR WE STOPPED OFF AT A CONFECTIONERY SHOP. TWO TEENAGERS WORKED NONSTOP TO PROVIDE SWEETS FOR FAMILIES' CELEBRATIONS THAT NIGHT.



THAT AFTERNOON WE WENT FOR REFRESHMENTS WITH KASIA AT THE AL-DEIRA HOTEL, WHICH HAD A HUGE TERRACE OVERLOOKING THE BEACH. FEELING ADVENTUROUS, WE WENT WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS...



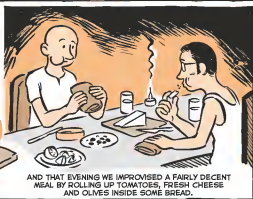
OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS I'D BEEN TRYING THE KIND OF SWEETS YOU COULDN'T DREAM UP. BUT THIS PARTICULAR CONCOCTION OPENED THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION TO A SUGAR-RUSH THAT TOOK THINGS TO A NEW LEVEL...



THEN WE WENT TO A BAKERY AND A SUPERMARKET TO STOCK UP ON PROVISIONS FOR OUR "BUNKER."



WE BOUGHT A LOCAL CHEESE WHICH WAS EXTREMELY SALTY AND AS HARD AS A BRICK. A SAW WOULD HAVE COME IN HANDY TO CUT IT...



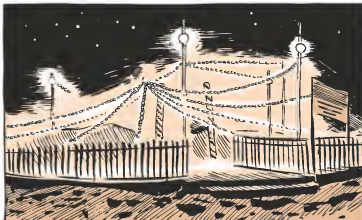
AND THAT EVENING WE IMPROVISED A FAIRLY DECENT MEAL BY ROLLING UP TOMATOES, FRESH CHEESE AND OLIVES INSIDE SOME BREAD.

AFTER DINNER, I TOOK A MOMENT TO COPY OUT MY FIELD NOTES.



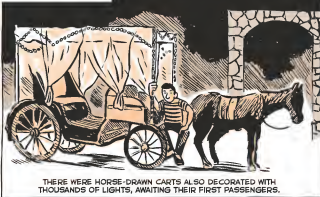
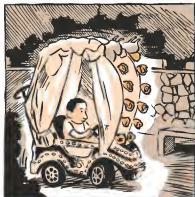
WHAT THE HELL DID I SCRAWL HERE? I CAN'T MAKE OUT A THING...

LATER ON, SAMER SHOWED US A TASTE OF STREET LIFE DURING RAMADAN. MARGUEES HAD BEEN PUT UP ON THE PORT, FESTOONED WITH HUNDREDS OF LIGHTS. BUT IT WAS EARLY AND NO ONE HAD SHOWED UP.



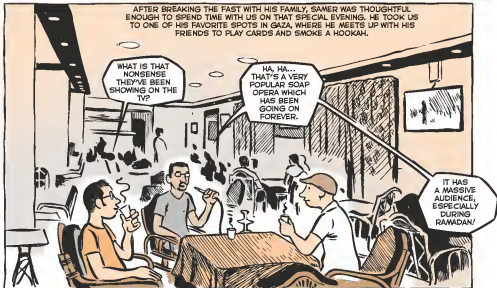
CHILDREN PLAYED IN THE STREET, SWINGING FLAMING SPONGES TIED ONTO STRINGS.

THERE WAS A PARK. ITS LIGHTS HAD BEEN SWITCHED OFF AND THE ONLY ILLUMINATION CAME FROM CHILDREN'S MINIATURE CARS, SPILLING HELLISH MUSIC FROM THEIR TINY LOUDSPEAKERS.



THERE WERE HORSE-DRAWN CARTS ALSO DECORATED WITH THOUSANDS OF LIGHTS, AWAITING THEIR FIRST PASSENGERS.

AFTER BREAKING THE FAST WITH HIS FAMILY, SAMER WAS THOUGHTFUL ENOUGH TO SPEND TIME WITH US ON THAT SPECIAL EVENING. HE TOOK US TO ONE OF HIS FAVORITE SPOTS IN GAZA, WHERE HE MEETS UP WITH HIS FRIENDS TO PLAY CARDS AND SMOKE A HOOKAH.



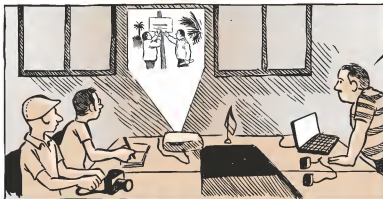
WHAT IS THAT NONSENSE THEY'VE BEEN SHOWING ON THE TV?

HA, HA... THAT'S A VERY POPULAR SOAP OPERA WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOREVER.

IT HAS A MASSIVE AUDIENCE, ESPECIALLY DURING RAMADAN!

NEXT MORNING, WE VISITED THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE OLDEST AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE. IT WAS FOUNDED IN 1944 AND TODAY COMPRISES 900 MEMBERS.

THIS COOPERATIVE WAS FOUNDED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF SERVING FARMERS AND BOOSTING COOPERATIVE INDUSTRY BY COMBINING RESOURCES AND COLLECTIVE EFFORT ALIKE.

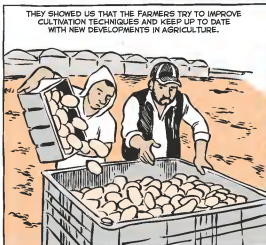


WE WANT OUR MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES, ACHIEVE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THIS AREA.

THE COOPERATIVE HAD SOUNDTRACKED THEIR SLIDE PRESENTATION WITH THE MAIN THEME OF "REQUIEM FOR A DREAM," SO THE EXPERIENCE WAS A FAIRLY NAUSEATING COMBINATION OF IMAGES OF POTATO FIELDS AND DISTURBING, INSISTENT MUSIC.



THEY SHOWED US THAT THE FARMERS TRY TO IMPROVE CULTIVATION TECHNIQUES AND KEEP UP TO DATE WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN AGRICULTURE.



BEFORE THE BLOCKADE, THIS COOPERATIVE WAS ONE OF THE FEW THAT HAD MANAGED TO PROMOTE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND OPEN UP NEW MARKETS IN THE WEST BANK AND JORDAN. THERE WAS A CONSEQUENT INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF NETWORKING, ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER ASSOCIATIONS.

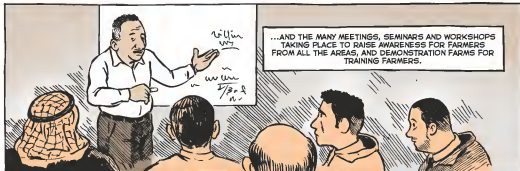
BUT NOW, EXPORTS HAD BEEN SEVERELY LIMITED BECAUSE OF ALL THE RESTRICTIONS.



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS WERE THE RECLAMATION OF FARMING LAND AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLECTIVE PROJECTS WITH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS...



...ALONG WITH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE FARMERS TO HELP ESTABLISH NEW GREENHOUSES...

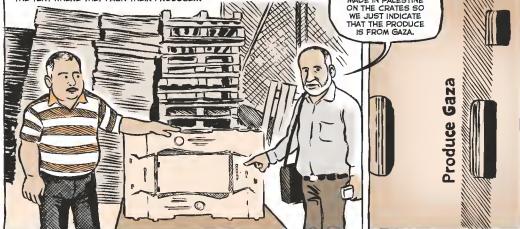


...AND THE MANY MEETINGS, SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS TAKING PLACE TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR FARMERS FROM ALL THE AREAS, AND DEMONSTRATION FARMS FOR TRAINING FARMERS.

FARMERS FACE DIFFICULTIES IN TRYING TO EXPORT GOODS AND THEY CONFRONT THREE ADDITIONAL MAJOR PROBLEMS: POWER CUTS, WATER SALINATION, AND A REDUCED WATER SUPPLY.



NEXT TO THE COOPERATIVE HEADQUARTERS IS THE TENT WHERE THEY PACK THEIR PRODUCE...

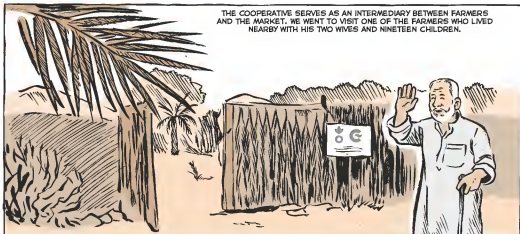


UNFORTUNATELY, WE STILL CAN'T PRINT "MADE IN PALESTINE" ON THE CRATES SO WE JUST INDICATE THAT THE PRODUCE IS FROM GAZA.

Produce Gaza

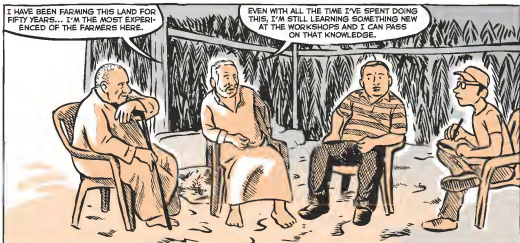


THE COOPERATIVE SERVES AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN FARMERS AND THE MARKET. WE WENT TO VISIT ONE OF THE FARMERS WHO LIVED NEARBY WITH HIS TWO WIVES AND NINETEEN CHILDREN.



I HAVE BEEN FARMING THIS LAND FOR FIFTY YEARS... I'M THE MOST EXPERIENCED OF THE FARMERS HERE.

EVEN WITH ALL THE TIME I'VE SPENT DOING THIS, I'M STILL LEARNING SOMETHING NEW AT THE WORKSHOPS AND I CAN PASS ON THAT KNOWLEDGE.



THINGS GOT VERY DIFFICULT WHEN THEY DESTROYED MY TWO HOMES AND MY GREENHOUSES A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO.

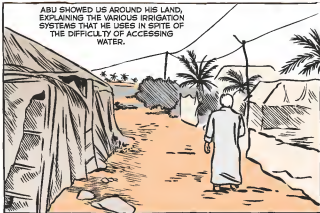


ONE OF HIS WIVES SHOWED US THE CONDITIONS THE FAMILY WAS LIVING IN TODAY, UNDER THE PROTECTIVE COVER OF PLASTIC AND CANVAS TARPS.

THEY HOPE THAT SOME DAY THEY WILL REBUILD THE HOMES THEY LOST.



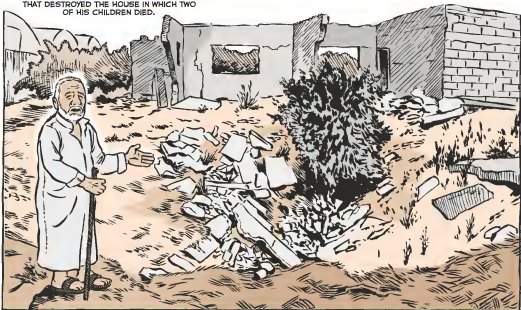
ABU SHOWED US AROUND HIS LAND, EXPLAINING THE VARIOUS IRRIGATION SYSTEMS THAT HE USES IN SPITE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF ACCESSING WATER.



SUDDENLY, HE STOPPED...

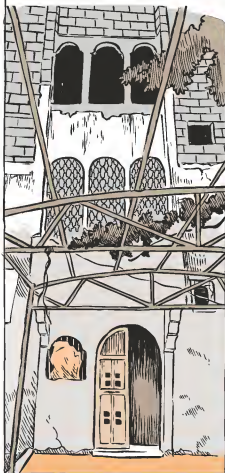


...AND SHOWED US THE IMPACT OF THE HOWITZER THAT DESTROYED THE HOUSE IN WHICH TWO OF HIS CHILDREN DIED.





THEN WE PAID A VISIT TO ABU SAID, ANOTHER FARMER WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE COOPERATIVE. THE FRONT OF HIS BUILDING HAD BEEN RECENTLY RECONSTRUCTED.

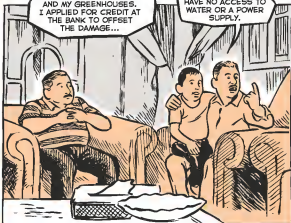


ABU HAS FOUR SONS AND ONE DAUGHTER. THE YOUNGEST BOY, WHO HAD A DISABILITY, WAS VERY AMUSED BY MAX'S CAMERA.

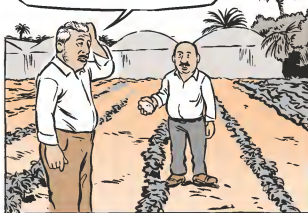


DURING THE WAR I LOST MY WATER SUPPLY AND MY GREENHOUSES. I APPLIED FOR CREDIT AT THE BANK TO OFFSET THE DAMAGE...

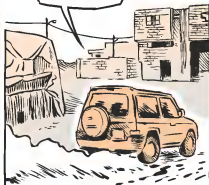
...BUT I STILL HAVE NO ACCESS TO WATER OR A POWER SUPPLY.



SALES ARE BAD BECAUSE IT'S DIFFICULT TO EXPORT, AND THIS YEAR THERE IS AN OVERSUPPLY OF POTATOES WHICH HAS TRIGGERED A STEEP FALL IN PRICES...

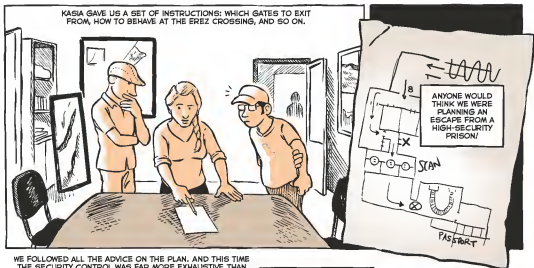


WHAT A DAY! MY STOMACH'S IN KNOTS.



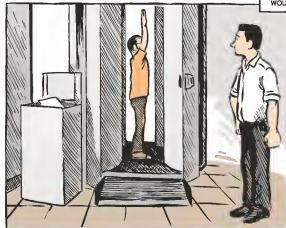
WE WENT BACK TO OUR OFFICES TO PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY OUT OF THE GAZA STRIP.

KASIA GAVE US A SET OF INSTRUCTIONS: WHICH GATES TO EXIT FROM, HOW TO BEHAVE AT THE EREZ CROSSING, AND SO ON.



WE FOLLOWED ALL THE ADVICE ON THE PLAN, AND THIS TIME THE SECURITY CONTROL WAS FAR MORE EXHAUSTIVE THAN WHEN WE'D ARRIVED. THEY REGISTERED OUR LUGGAGE AND WE PASSED THROUGH A FULL-BODY SCANNER.

BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG. AFTER THE SCAN, THE GATE WOULDN'T OPEN FOR ME.



THEY HAD DETECTED SOME TRULY LETHAL SHOPPING RECEIPTS IN A HIDDEN ZIPPED POCKET ON MY TROUSER LEG, SO IT WAS BACK TO THE SCANNER FOR ROUND TWO.

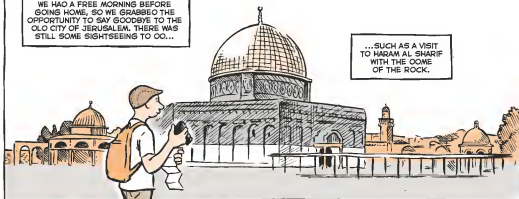


THE "ESCAPE" PLAN WAS A SUCCESS. A GETAWAY CAR WAS WAITING FOR US IN THE CAR PARK, AND WE RETURNED TO JERUSALEM.



WE HAD A FREE MORNING BEFORE GOING HOME, SO WE GRABBED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM. THERE WAS STILL SOME SIGHTSEEING TO DO...

...SUCH AS A VISIT TO HARAM AL SHARIF WITH THE DOME OF THE ROCK.



ON THE OTHER SIDE, BY THE WAILING WALL, THERE WERE MULTITUDES OF SCHOOL TRIPS THAT DAY.



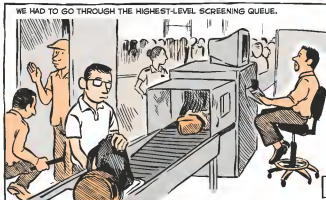
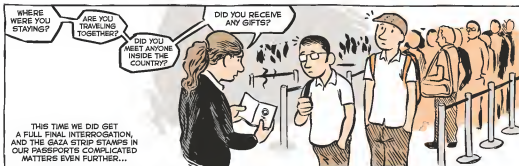
AND LASTLY, WE ENJOYED THE SPECTACULAR SIGHTS FROM THE TERRACED ROOF OF THE AUSTRIAN HOSPICE.

WE SAID GOODBYE TO RICARDO, HAMID AND OMAR. AS A TOKEN OF THANKS, I GAVE EACH OF THEM THEIR PORTRAITS, WHICH I'D SKETCHED WHILE CLOSETED AWAY IN THE "BUNKER" IN GAZA.

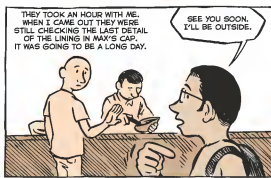
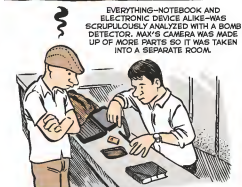
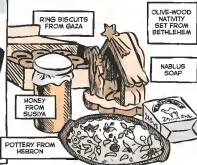


THEY REMINDED US OF THE STRICT ISRAELI SECURITY CONTROLS; AND ON THE WAY TO THE AIRPORT, MAX SUBJECTED ME ONCE MORE TO A STREAM OF THEORETICAL INTERROGATIONS.





THE LOVELY SOUVENIRS FROM PALESTINE IN OUR HAND LUGGAGE WERE LAID OUT UNDER THE STRICT GAZE OF THE SECURITY OFFICERS:





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